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Swinburne

"And he lifted both hands to crown the Arcadian's hair."

—"Atalanta In Calydon"

A BOOK LOVER'S LIBRARY
OF POETICAL LITERATURE

IN TWENTY-FIVE VOLUMES

A. C. Swinburne
and
Dante Gabriel Rossetti

With an Introduction to Swinburne by R. Le Gallienne, and a Frontispiece in Color by Henry J. Peck

THE CO-OPERATIVE PUBLICATION SOCIETY

New York London

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE was born at Pimlico, London, April 5, 1837. His father was Admiral Swinburne, and his mother was a daughter of the third Earl of Ashburnham. He was educated at Balliol College, Oxford. Instinctive gifts and conscious art have seldom met in such harmonious union as in the case of Mr. Swinburne. Born with a lyrical impulse second only to Shelley's, he has trained that impulse by every process of culture, till sometimes, in the perfection of his art, we can almost be forgiven for forgetting that it is nature too. While individualized in English poetry to the point of having made his name an adjective, Mr. Swinburne, for the purpose of a primary classification, might be described as having Keats and Shelley for his grandfathers, so effectively does he combine in his poetry the most striking qualities of each: the concrete, sensuous beauty of Keats with the passionate singing of Shelley. Keats was not a singer, and Shelley's love of beauty was more a spiritual vision than the artist's physical delight in form and color, which gives to the poetry of Keats the materiality of sculpture and painting.

For sheer sensuous delight of singing, the pleasure of beautiful, fragrant words singing together, in a matchless harmony of music, Mr. Swinburne's poetry is unique in the English language. More than any other English poet, Mr. Swinburne has shown how poetry can do the work of music. Mr. Swinburne is pre-eminently what used to be called a

"poet's poet"—that is, he chiefly appeals to our æsthetic emotions rather than to our intellectual or moral instincts—though he by no means leaves those unsatisfied, and it is only the marked verbal beauty of his verse which has obscured for some critics the firm organic structure of thought and "criticism of life" beneath his greatest work.

This is not to deny that, like most great artists, Mr. Swinburne has the defects of his qualities, and that often his marvellous metrical gift runs away with him, so that some of his poems are mere experiments in alliteration and vowelization, lacking alike ascertainable meaning, or even complete æsthetic charm. But every poet is to be judged by his best, and the best of Mr. Swinburne's poetry is hardly less remarkable in amount than in quality. Mr. Swinburne has been a most prolific writer, in prose as well as verse, and the mere names of his various volumes would fill up more space than I can afford. But the books on which his fame will finally rest are "Atalanta in Calydon," "Poems and Ballads" (First Series), "Songs Before Sunrise," and "Tristram of Lyonesse." These four volumes completely illustrate the variety of Mr. Swinburne's gifts and the enthusiasms to which he has applied them. "Atalanta in Calydon" more than any other of his works illustrates that successful union of instinct and learning of which I have spoken. While it is admittedly a masterly reproduction of the form of the old Greek tragedy, it is at the same time a vital and ever fresh English poem. One has only to compare it with such a frigid imitation as Arnold's "Merope" to measure its unique success. In it Mr. Swinburne showed himself a master of an entirely individual blank verse, as in the wonderful choruses he displayed a lyric gift of majestic movement and haunting melody. In "Songs Before Sunrise" Mr. Swinburne applied the thunders and the rainbows of his rhetoric to a passionate sympathy with the Italian revolutionists, and at that time of day he was regarded as a dangerous apostle of socialism and even anarchy, though the years have transfixed that flourish of his youth, and his later

singing is almost fanatically conservative. Similarly the wild poet of the "Poems and Ballads" has long since abandoned his Faustine and his Dolores and taken to turning the daintiest roundels about a baby's hands or a baby's feet. "Poems and Ballads" naturally shocked the Anglo-Saxon conscience, but even those who were repelled by its passionate glorification of the senses could not prevent his almost diabolical music ringing in their ears, like some lost terrible music of the Venusberg. No one since Poe has done anything so original metrically as "Dolores," and Mr. Swinburne's art is far more subtle and exquisite; while "Felise" is perhaps the greatest love-poem of farewell in the language. Mr. Swinburne speaks of the whole book as a "revel of rhymes," and that is just what it is. It is the Muse turned Mænad, and perhaps the rapture and romance of the senses have never before or since found such a delirious and yet so distinguished an expression.

"Tristram of Lyonesse" has never, to my thinking, received its due meed of appreciation. It is too long, and the story lags, but, if only for its striking revival of the heroic couplet—which Mr. Swinburne uses as well, if not better, than Marlowe—and for the noble passion of the love-scenes, it is the most notable of all Mr. Swinburne's later work. It contains, too, one of the most beautiful and impassioned of those sea-pictures which are particularly characteristic of Mr. Swinburne's poetry.

RICHARD LE GALLIENNE.

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POEMS AND BALLADS.

TO

MY FRIEND

EDWARD BURNE JONES

THESE POEMS

ARE AFFECTIONATELY AND ADMIRINGLY

DEDICATED.

LAUS VENERIS.

Lors dit en plourant ; Hélas trop malheureux homme et mauldict pescheur, oncques ne verrai-je clémence et miséricorde de Dieu. Ores m'en irai-je d'icy et me cacherai dedans le mont Horsel, en requérant de faveur et d'amoureuse merci ma doulce dame Vénus, car pour son amour serai-je bien à tout jamais damné en enfer. Voicy la fin de tous mes faicts d'armes et de toutes mes belles chansons. Hélas, trop belle estoyt la face de ma dame et ses yeulx, et en mauvais jour je vis ces chouses-là. Lors s'en alla tout en gémissant et se retourna chez elle, et là vescut tristement en grand amour près de sa dame. Puis après advint que le pape vit un jour esclater sur son baston force belles fleurs rouges et blanches et maints boutons de feuilles, et ainsi vit-il reverdir toute l'escorce. Ce dont il eut grande crainte et moult s'en esmut, et grande pitié lui prit de ce chevalier qui s'en estoyt départi sans espoir comme un homme misérable et damné. Doncques envoya force messaigers devers luy pour le ramener, disant qu'il aurait de Dieu grace et bonne absolution de son grand pesché d'amour. Mais oncques plus ne le virent ; car toujours demeura ce pauvre chevalier auprès de Vénus la haulte et forte déesse ès flancs de la montagne amoureuse.

Livre des grandes merveilles d'amour, escript en latin et en françoys par Maistre Antoine Gaget. 1530.

LAUS VENERIS.

Asleep or waking is it? for her neck,
Kissed over close, wears yet a purple speck
  Wherein the pained blood falters and goes out;
Soft, and stung softly—fairer for a fleck.

But though my lips shut sucking on the place,
There is no vein at work upon her face;
  Her eyelids are so peaceful, no doubt
Deep sleep has warmed her blood through all its ways.

Lo, this is she that was the world's delight;
The old gray years were parcels of her might;
  The strewings of the ways wherein she trod
Were the twain seasons of the day and night.

Lo, she was thus when her clear limbs enticed
All lips that now grow sad with kissing Christ,
  Stained with blood fallen from the feet of God,
The feet and hands whereat our souls were priced.

Alas, Lord, surely thou art great and fair.
But lo her wonderfully woven hair!
  And thou didst heal us with thy piteous kiss;
But see now, Lord; her mouth is lovelier.

She is right fair; what hath she done to thee?
Nay, fair Lord Christ, lift up thine eyes and see;
  Had now thy mother such a lip—like this?
Thou knowest how sweet a thing it is to me.

Inside the Horsel here the air is hot;
Right little peace one hath for it, God wot;
  The scented dusted daylight burns the air,
And my heart chokes me till I hear it not.

Behold, my Venus, my soul's body, lies
With my love laid upon her garment-wise,
  Feeling my love in all her limbs and hair
And shed between her eyelids through her eyes.

She holds my heart in her sweet open hands
Hanging asleep ; hard by her head there stands,
  Crowned with gilt thorns and clothed with flesh
    like fire,
Love, wan as foam blown up the salt burnt sands—

Hot as the brackish waifs of yellow spume
That shift and steam—loose clots of arid fume
  From the sea's panting mouth of dry desire ;
There stands he, like one laboring at a loom.

The warp holds fast across ; and every thread
That makes the woof up has dry specks of red ;
  Always the shuttle cleaves clean through, and he
Weaves with the hair of many a ruined head.

Love is not glad nor sorry, as I deem ;
Laboring he dreams, and labors in the dream,
  Till when the spool is finished, lo I see
His web, reeled off, curls and goes out like steam.

Night falls like fire ; the heavy lights run low,
And as they drop, my blood and body so
  Shake as the flame shakes, full of days and hours
That sleep not neither weep they as they go.

Ah yet would God this flesh of mine might be
Where air might wash and long leaves cover me,
  Where tides of grass break into foam of flowers,
Or where the wind's feet shine along the sea.

Ah yet would God that stems and roots were bred
Out of my weary body and my head,
  That sleep were sealed upon me with a seal,
And I were as the least of all his dead.

Would God my blood were dew to feed the grass,
Mine ears made deaf and mine eyes blind as glass,
  My body broken as a turning wheel,
And my mouth stricken ere it saith Alas !

Ah God, that love were as a flower or flame,
That life were as the naming of a name,
  That death were not more pitiful than desire,
That these things were not one thing and the same!

Behold now, surely somewhere there is death:
For each man hath some space of years, he saith,
  A little space of time ere time expire,
A little day, a little way of breath.

And lo, between the sundawn and the sun,
His day's work and his night's work are undone;
  And lo, between the nightfall and the light,
He is not, and none knoweth of such an one.

Ah God, that I were as all souls that be,
As any herb or leaf of any tree,
  As men that toil through hours of laboring night,
As bones of men under the deep sharp sea.

Outside it must be winter among men;
For at the gold bars of the gates again
  I heard all night and all the hours of it,
The wind's wet wings and fingers drip with rain.

Knights gather, riding sharp for cold; I know
The ways and woods are strangled with the snow;
  And with short song the maidens spin and sit
Until Christ's birthnight, lily-like, arow.

The scent and shadow shed about me make
The very soul in all my senses ache;
  The hot hard night is fed upon my breath,
And sleep beholds me from afar awake.

Alas, but surely where the hills grow deep,
Or where the wild ways of the sea are steep,
  Or in strange places somewhere there is death,
And on death's face the scattered hair of sleep.

There lover-like with lips and limbs that meet
They lie, they pluck sweet fruit of life and eat;
  But me the hot and hungry days devour,
And in my mouth no fruit of theirs is sweet.

No fruit of theirs, but fruit of my desire,
For her love's sake whose lips through mine respire;
  Her eyelids on her eyes like flower on flower,
Mine eyelids on mine eyes like fire on fire.

So lie we, not as sleep that lies by death,
With heavy kisses and with happy breath;
  Not as man lies by woman, when the bride
Laughs low for love's sake and the words he saith,

For she lies, laughing low with love; she lies
And turns his kisses on her lips to sighs,
  To sighing sound of lips unsatisfied,
And the sweet tears are tender with her eyes.

Ah, not as they, but as the souls that were
Slain in the old time, having found her fair;
  Who, sleeping with her lips upon their eyes,
Heard sudden serpents hiss across her hair.

Their blood runs round the roots of time like rain,
She casts them forth and gathers them again;
  With nerve and bone she weaves and multiplies
Exceeding pleasure out of extreme pain.

Her little chambers drip with flower-like red,
Her girdles, and the chaplets of her head,
  Her armlets and her anklets; with her feet
She tramples all that winepress of the dead.

Her gateways smoke with fume of flowers and fires,
With loves burnt out and unassuaged desires;
  Between her lips the steam of them is sweet,
The languor in her ears of many lyres.

Her beds are full of perfume and sad sound,
Her doors are made with music, and barred round
  With sighing and with laughter and with tears,
With tears whereby strong souls of men are bound.

There is the knight Adonis that was slain;
With flesh and blood she chains him for a chain;
  The body and the spirit in her ears
Cry, for her lips divide him vein by vein.

Yea, all she slayeth ; yea, every man save me ;
Me, love, thy lover that must cleave to thee
Till the ending of the days and ways of earth,
The shaking of the sources of the sea.

Me, most forsaken of all souls that fell ;
Me, satiated with things insatiable ;
Me, for whose sake the extreme hell makes mirth,
Yea, laughter kindles at the heart of hell.

Alas thy beauty ! for thy mouth's sweet sake
My soul is bitter to me, my limbs quake
As water, as the flesh of men that weep,
As their heart's vein whose heart goes nigh to break.

Ah God, that sleep with flower-sweet finger-tips
Would crush the fruit of death upon my lips ;
Ah God, that death would tread the grapes of sleep
And wring their juice upon me as it drips.

There is no change of cheer for many days,
But change of chimes high up in the air, that sways
Rung by the running fingers of the wind ;
And singing sorrows heard on hidden ways.

Day smiteth day in twain, night sundereth night,
And on mine eyes the dark sits as the light ;
Yea, Lord, thou knowest I know not, having sinned,
If heaven be clean or unclean in thy sight.

Yea, as if earth were sprinkled over me,
Such chafed harsh earth as chokes a sandy sea,
Each pore doth yearn, and the dried blood thereof
Gasps by sick fits, my heart swims heavily,

There is a feverish famine in my veins ;
Below her bosom, where a crushed grape stains
The white and blue, there my lips caught and clove
An hour since, and what mark of me remains ?

I dare not always touch her, lest the kiss
Leave my lips charred. Yea, Lord, a little bliss,
Brief bitter bliss, one hath for a great sin;
Nathless thou knowest how sweet a thing it is.

Sin, is it sin whereby men's souls are thrust
Into the pit? yet had I a good trust
To save my soul before it slipped therein,
Trod under by the fire-shod feet of lust.

For if mine eyes fail and my soul takes breath,
I look between the iron sides of death
Into sad hell where all sweet love hath end,
All but the pain that never finisheth.

There are the naked faces of great kings,
The singing folk with all their lute-playings;
There when one cometh he shall have to friend
The grave that covets and the worm that clings.

There sit the knights that were so great of hand,
The ladies that were queens of fair green land,
Grown gray and black now, brought unto the dust,
Soiled, without raiment, clad about with sand.

There is one end for all of them; they sit
Naked and sad, they drink the dregs of it,
Trodden as grapes in the wine-press of lust,
Trampled and trodden by the fiery feet.

I see the marvellous mouth whereby there fell
Cities and people whom the gods loved well,
Yet for her sake on them the fire gat hold,
And for their sakes on her the fire of hell.

And softer than the Egyptian lote-leaf is
The queen whose face was worth the world to kiss,
Wearing at breast a suckling snake of gold;
And large pale lips of strong Semiramis.

Curled like a tiger's that curl back to feed;
Red only where the last kiss made them bleed;
Her hair most thick with many a carven gem,
Deep in the mane, great-chested, like a steed.

Yea, with red sin the faces of them shine;
But in all these there was no sin like mine;
No, not in all the strange great sins of them
That made the wine-press froth and foam with wine.

For I was of Christ's choosing, I God's knight,
No blinkard heathen stumbling for scant light;
I can well see, for all the dusty days
Gone past, the clean great time of goodly fight.

I smell the breathing battle sharp with blows,
With shriek of shafts and snapping short of bows;
The fair pure sword smites out in subtle ways,
Sounds and long lights are shed between the rows

Of beautiful mailed men; the edged light slips,
Most like a snake that takes short breath and dips
Sharp from the beautifully bending head,
With all its gracious body lithe as lips

That curl in touching you; right in this wise
My sword doth, seeming fire in mine own eyes,
Leaving all colors in them brown and red
And flecked with death; then the keen breaths like sighs,

The caught-up choked dry laughters following them,
When all the fighting face is grown a flame
For pleasure, and the pulse that stuns the ears,
And the heart's gladness of the goodly game.

Let me think yet a little; I do know
These things were sweet, but sweet such years ago,
Their savor is all turned now into tears;
Yea, ten years since, where the blue ripples blow

The blue curled eddies of the blowing Rhine,
I felt the sharp wind shaking grass and vine
Touch my blood too, and sting me with delight
Through all this waste and weary body of mine

That never feels clear air; right gladly then
I rode alone, a great way off my men,
And heard the chiming bridle smite and smite,
And gave each rhyme thereof some rhyme again,

Till my song shifted to that iron one;
Seeing there rode up between me and the sun
  Some certain of my foe's men, for his three
White wolves across their painted coats did run.

The first red-bearded, with square cheeks—alack,
I made my knave's blood turn his beard to black;
  The slaying of him was a joy to see:
Perchance too, when at night he came not back,

Some woman fell a-weeping, whom this thief
Would beat when he had drunken; yet small grief
  Hath any for the ridding of such knaves;
Yea, if one wept, I doubt her teen was brief.

This bitter love is sorrow in all lands,
Draining of eyelids, wringing of drenched hands,
  Sighing of hearts and filling up of graves;
A sign across the head of the world he stands,

As one that hath a plague-mark on his brows;
Dust and spilt blood do track him to his house
  Down under earth; sweet smells of lip and cheek,
Like a sweet snake's breath made more poisonous

With chewing of some perfumed deadly grass,
Are shed all round his passage if he pass,
  And their quenched savor leaves the whole soul
    weak
Sick with keen guessing whence the perfume was.

As one who hidden in deep sedge and reeds
Smells the rare scent made where a panther feeds,
  And tracking ever slotwise the warm smell
Is snapped upon by the sweet mouth and bleeds

His head far down the hot sweet throat of her—
So one tracks love, whose breath is deadlier,
  And lo, one springe and you are fast in hell,
Fast as the gin's grip of a wayfarer.

I think now, as the heavy hours decease
One after one, and bitter thoughts increase
  One upon one, of all sweet finished things;
The breaking of the battle; the long peace

Wherein we sat clothed softly, each man's hair
Crowned with green leaves beneath white hoods of vair,
The sounds of sharp spears at great tourneyings,
And noise of singing in the late sweet air.

I sang of love, too, knowing nought thereof;
"Sweeter," I said, "the little laugh of love
Than tears out of the eyes of Magdalen,
Or any fallen feather of the Dove.

"The broken little laugh that spoils a kiss,
The ache of purple pulses, and the bliss
Of blinded eyelids that expand again—
Love draws them open with those lips of his,

"Lips that cling hard till the kissed face has grown
Of one same fire and color with their own;
Then ere one sleep, appeased with sacrifice,
Where his lips wounded, there his lips atone."

I sang these things long since and knew them not;
"Lo, here is love, or there is love, God wot,
This man and that finds favor in his eyes,"
I said, "but, I, what guerdon have I got?

"The dust of praise that is blown everywhere
In all men's faces with the common air;
The bay-leaf that wants chafing to be sweet
Before they wind it in a singer's hair."

So that one dawn I rode forth sorrowing;
I had no hope but of some evil thing,
And so rode slowly past the windy wheat,
And past the vineyard and the water-spring,

Up to the Horsel. A great elder-tree
Held back its heaps of flowers to let me see
The ripe tall grass, and one that walked therein,
Naked, with hair shed over to the knee.

She walked between the blossom and the grass;
I knew the beauty of her, what she was,
The beauty of her body and her sin,
And in my flesh the sin of hers, alas!

Alas! for sorrow is all the end of this.
O sad kissed mouth, how sorrowful it is!
O breast whereat some suckling sorrow clings,
Red with the bitter blossom of a kiss!

Ah, with blind lips I felt for you, and found
About my neck your hands and hair enwound,
The hands that stifle and the hair that stings,
I felt them fasten sharply without sound.

Yea, for my sin I had great store of bliss
Rise up, make answer for me, let thy kiss
Seal my lips hard from speaking of my sin,
Lest one go mad to hear how sweet it is.

Yet I waxed faint with fume of barren bowers,
And murmuring of the heavy-headed hours;
And let the dove's beak fret and peck within
My lips in vain, and Love shed fruitless flowers.

So that God looked upon me when your hands
Were hot about me; yea, God brake my bands
To save my soul alive, and I came forth
Like a man blind and naked in strange lands.

That hears men laugh and weep, and knows not whence
Nor wherefore, but is broken in his sense;
Howbeit I met folk riding from the north
Toward Rome, to purge them of their soul's offence,

And rode with them, and spake to none; the day
Stunned me like lights upon some wizard way,
And ate like fire mine eyes and mine eyesight;
So rode I, hearing all these chant and pray,

And marvelled; till before us rose and fell
White cursed hills, like outer skirts of hell
Seen where men's eyes look through the day to night,
Like a jagged shell's lips, harsh, untunable,

Blown in between by devils' wrangling breath;
Nathless we won well past that hell and death,
  Down to the sweet land where all airs are good,
Even unto Rome where God's grace tarrieth.

Then came each man and worshipped at his knees
Who in the Lord God's likeness bears the keys
  To bind or loose, and called on Christ's shed blood,
And so the sweet-souled father gave him ease.

But when I came I fell down at his feet,
Saying, "Father, though the Lord's blood be right sweet,
  The spot it takes not off the panther's skin,
Nor shall an Ethiop's stain be bleached with it.

"Lo, I have sinned and have spat out at God,
Wherefore his hand is heavier and his rod
  More sharp because of mine exceeding sin,
And all his raiment redder than bright blood

"Before mine eyes; yea, for my sake I wot
The heat of hell is waxen seven times hot
  Through my great sin." Then spake he some sweet word,
Give me cheer; which thing availed me not;

Yea, scarce I wist if such indeed were said;
For when I ceased—lo, as one newly dead
  Who hears a great cry out of hell, I heard
The crying of his voice across my head.

"Until this dry shred staff, that hath no whit
Of leaf nor bark, bear blossom and smell sweet,
  Seek thou not any mercy in God's sight,
For so long shalt thou be cast out from it."

Yea, what if dried-up stems wax red and green,
Shall that thing be which is not nor has been?
  Yea, what if sapless bark wax green and white,
Shall any good fruit grow upon my sin?

Nay, though sweet fruit were plucked of a dry tree,
And though men drew sweet waters of the sea,
  There should not grow sweet leaves on this dead
    stem,
This waste wan body and shaken soul of me.

Yea, though God search it warily enough,
There is not one sound thing in all thereof;
  Though he search all my veins through, searching
    them
He shall find nothing whole therein but love.

For I came home right heavy, with small cheer,
And lo my love, mine own soul's heart, more dear
  Than mine own soul, more beautiful than God,
Who hath my being between the hands of her—

Fair still, but fair for no man saving me,
As when she came out of the naked sea
  Making the foam as fire whereon she trod,
And as the inner flower of fire was she.

Yea, she laid hold upon me, and her mouth
Clove unto mine as soul to body doth,
  And, laughing, made her lips luxurious;
Her hair had smells of all the sunburnt south,

Strange spice and flower, strange savor of crushed
    fruit,
And perfume the swart kings tread underfoot
  For pleasure when their minds wax amorous,
Charred frankincense and grated sandal-root.

And I forgot fear and all weary things,
All ended prayers and perished thanksgivings,
  Feeling her face with all her eager hair
Cleave to me, clinging as a fire that clings

To the body and to the raiment, burning them;
As after death I know that such-like flame
  Shall cleave to me forever; yea, what care,
Albeit I burn then, having felt the same?

Ah love, there is no better life than this;
To have known love, how bitter a thing it is,
And afterward be cast out of God's sight;
Yea, these that know not, shall they have such bliss

High up in barren heaven before his face
As we twain in the heavy-hearted place,
Remembering love and all the dead delight,
And all that time was sweet with for a space?

For till the thunder in the trumpet be,
Soul may divide from body, but not we
One from another; I hold thee with my hand,
I let mine eyes have all their will of thee,

I seal myself upon thee with my might,
Abiding alway out of all men's sight
Until God loosen over sea and land
The thunder of the trumpets of the night.

EXPLICIT LAUS VENERIS.

PHÆDRA.

HIPPOLYTUS; PHÆDRA; CHORUS OF TRÆZENIAN WOMEN.

HIPPOLYTUS.

Lay not thine hand upon me; let me go;
Take off thine eyes that put the gods to shame.
What, wilt thou turn my loathing to thy death?

PHÆDRA.

Nay, I will never loosen hold nor breath
Till thou have slain me; godlike for great brows
Thou art, and thewed as gods are, with clear hair:
Draw now thy sword and smite me as thou art god,
For verily I am smitten of other gods,
Why not of thee?

CHORUS.

O queen, take heed of words,
Why wilt thou eat the husk of evil speech?
Wear wisdom for that veil about thy head
And goodness for the binding of thy brows.

PHÆDRA.

Nay, but this god hath cause enow to smite:
If he will slay me, baring breast and throat,
I lean toward the stroke with silent mouth
And a great heart. Come, take thy sword and slay;
Let me not starve between desire and death,
But send me on my way with glad wet lips;
For in the vein-drawn ashen-colored palm
Death's hollow hand holds water of sweet draught
To dip and slake dried mouths at, as a deer
Specked red from thorns laps deep and loses pain.
Yea, if mine own blood ran upon my mouth,
I would drink that. Nay, but be swift with me;
Set thy sword here between the girdle and breast,
For I shall grow a poison if I live.
Are not my cheeks as grass, my body pale,
And my breath like a dying poisoned man's?
O whatsoever of godlike names thou be,
By thy chief name I charge thee, thou strong god,
And bid thee slay me. Strike, up to the gold,
Up to the hand-grip of the hilt; strike here;
For I am Cretan of my birth; strike now;
For I am Theseus' wife; stab up to the rims,
I am born daughter to Pasiphae.
See thou spare not for greatness of my blood,
Nor for the shining letters of my name:
Make thy sword sure inside thine hand and smite,
For the bright writing of my name is black,
And I am sick with hating the sweet sun.

HIPPOLYTUS.

Let not this woman wail and cleave to me,
That am no part of the gods' wrath with her;
Loose ye her hands from me lest she take hurt.

CHORUS.

Lady, this speech and majesty are twain ;
Pure shame is of one counsel with the gods.

HIPPOLYTUS.

Man is as beast when shame stands off from him.

PHÆDRA.

Man, what have I to do with shame or thee ?
I am not of one counsel with the gods.
I am their kin, I have strange blood in me,
I am not of their likeness nor of thine :
My veins are mixed, and therefore am I mad,
Yea, therefore chafe and turn on mine own flesh,
Half a woman made with half a god.
But thou wast hewn out of an iron womb
And fed with molten mother-snow for milk.
A sword was nurse of thine ; Hippolyta,
That had the spear to father, and the axe
To bridesman, and wet blood of sword-slain men
For wedding-water out of a noble well,
Even she did bear thee, thinking of a sword,
And thou wast made a man mistakingly.
Nay, for I love thee, I will have thy hands,
Nay, for I will not loose thee, thou art sweet,
Thou art my son, I am thy father's wife,
I ache toward thee with a bridal blood,
The pulse is heavy in all my married veins,
My whole face beats, I will feed full of thee,
My body is empty of ease, I will be fed,
I am burnt to the bone with love, thou shalt not go,
I am heartsick, and mine eyelids prick mine eyes,
Thou shalt not sleep nor eat nor say a word
Till thou hast slain me. I am not good to live.

CHORUS.

This is an evil born with all its teeth,
When love is cast out of the bound of love.

HIPPOLYTUS.

There is no hate that is so hateworthy.

PHÆDRA.

I pray thee turn that hate of thine my way,
I hate not it nor anything of thine.
Lo, maidens, how he burns about the brow,
And draws the chafing sword-strap down his hand.
What wilt thou do ? wilt thou be worse than death ?
Be but as sweet as is the bitterest,
The most dispiteous out of all the gods,
I am well pleased. Lo, do I crave so much ?
I do but bid thee be unmerciful,
Even the one thing thou art. Pity me not:
Thou wert not quick to pity. Think of me
As of a thing thy hounds are keen upon
In the wet woods between the windy ways,
And slay me for a spoil. This body of mine
Is worth a wild beast's fell or hide of hair,
And spotted deeper than a panther's grain.
I were but dead if thou wert pure indeed ;
I pray thee by thy cold green holy crown
And by the fillet-leaves of Artemis.
Nay, but thou wilt not. Death is not like thee
Albeit men hold him worst of all the gods.
For of all gods Death only loves not gifts,*
Nor with burnt-offering nor blood-sacrifice
Shalt thou do aught to get thee grace of him ;
He will have naught of altar and altar-song,
And from him only of all the lords in heaven
Persuasion turns a sweet averted mouth.
But thou art worse : from thee with baffled breath
Back on my lips my prayer falls like a blow,
And beats upon them, dumb. What shall I say ?
There is no word I can compel thee with
To do me good and slay me. But take heed ;
I say, be wary ; look between thy feet,
Lest a snare take them though the ground be good.

HIPPOLYTUS.

Shame may do most where fear is found most weak
That which for shame's sake yet I have not done,

*Æsch. Fr. Niobe :—
μόνος θεῶν γὰρ θάνατος οὐ δώρων ἐρᾷ, κ. τ. λ.

Shall it be done for fears ? Take thine own way ;
Better the foot slip than the whole soul swerve.

PHÆDRA.

The man is choice and exquisite of mouth ;
Yet in the end a curse shall curdle it.

CHORUS.

He goes with cloak upgathered to the lip,
Holding his eye as with some ill in sight.

PHÆDRA.

A bitter ill he hath i' the way thereof,
And it shall burn the sight out as with fire.

CHORUS.

Speak no such word whereto mischance is kin.

PHÆDRA.

Out of my heart and by fate's leave I speak.

CHORUS.

Set not thy heart to follow after fate.

PHÆDRA.

O women, O sweet people of this land,
O goodly city and pleasant ways thereof,
And woods with pasturing grass and great well-heads,
And hills with light and night between your leaves,
And winds with sound and silence in your lips,
And earth and water and all immortal things,
I take you to my witness what I am.
There is a god about me like as fire,
Sprung whence, who knoweth, or who hath heart to say ?
A god more strong than whom slain beasts can soothe,
Or honey, or any spilth of blood-like wine,
Nor shall one please him with a whitened brow
Nor wheat nor wool nor aught of plaited leaf.
For like my mother am I stung and slain,

And round my cheeks have such red malady
And on my lips such fire and foam as hers.
This is that Atè out of Amathus
That breeds up death and gives it one for love.
She hath slain mercy, and for dead mercy's sake
(Being frighted with this sister that was slain)
Flees from before her fearful-footed shame,
And will not bear the bending of her brows
And long soft arrows flown from under them
As from bows bent. Desire flows out of her
As out of lips doth speech : and over her
Shines fire, and round her and beneath her fire.
She hath sown pain and plague in all our house,
Love loathed of love, and mates unmatchable,
Wild wedlock, and the lusts that bleat or low,
And marriage-fodder snuffed about of kine.
Lo how the heifer runs with leaping flank
Sleek under shaggy and speckled lies of hair,
And chews a horrible lip, and with harsh tongue
Laps alien froth and licks a loathlier mouth.
Alas, a foul first steam of trodden tares,
And fouler of these late grapes underfoot.
A bitter way of waves and clean-cut foam
Over the sad road of sonorous sea
The high gods gave king Theseus for no love,
Nay, but for love, yet to no loving end.
Alas the long thwarts and the fervent oars,
And blown hard sails that straightened the scant rope !
There were no strong pools in the hollow sea
To drag at them and suck down side and beak,
No wind to catch them in the teeth and hair,
No shoal, no shallow among the roaring reefs,
No gulf whereout the straining tides throw spars,
No surf where white bones twist like whirled white fire.
But like to death he came with death, and sought
And slew and spoiled and gat him that he would.
For death, for marriage, and for child-getting,
I set my curse against him as a sword ;
Yea, and the severed half thereof I leave
Pittheus, because he slew not (when that face
Was tender, and the life still soft in it)

The small swathed child, but bred him for my fate.
I would I had been the first that took her death
Out from between wet hoofs and reddened teeth,
Splashed horns, fierce fetlocks of the brother bull!
For now shall I take death a deadlier way,
Gathering it up between the feet of love
Or off the knees of murder reaching it.

THE TRIUMPH OF TIME.

Before our lives divide forever,
While time is with us and hands are free
(Time, swift to fasten and swift to sever
Hand from hand, as we stand by the sea),
I will say no word that a man might say
Whose whole life's love goes down in a day;
For this could never have been; and never,
Though the gods and the years relent, shall be.

Is it worth a tear, is it worth an hour,
To think of things that are well outworn?
Of fruitless husk and fugitive flower,
The dream foregone and the deed forborne?
Though joy be done with and grief be vain,
Time shall not sever us wholly in twain;
Earth is not spoilt for a single shower;
But the rain has ruined the ungrown corn.

It will grow not again, this fruit of my heart,
Smitten with sunbeams, ruined with rain.
The singing seasons divide and depart,
Winter and summer depart in twain.
It will grow not again, it is ruined at root,
The bloodlike blossom, the dull red fruit;
Though the heart yet sickens, the lips yet smart,
With sullen savor of poisonous pain.

I have given no man of my fruit to eat;
I trod the grapes, I have drunken the wine.
Had you eaten and drunken and found it sweet,
This wild new growth of the corn and vine,

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This wine and bread without lees or leaven,
We had grown as, gods as the gods in heaven,
Souls fair to look upon, goodly to greet,
One splendid spirit, your soul and mine.

In the change of years, in the coil of things,
In the clamor and rumor of life to be,
We, drinking love at the furthest springs,
Covered with love as a covering tree,
We had grown as gods, as the gods above,
Filled from the heart to the lips with love,
Held fast in his hands, clothed warm with his wings,
O love, my love, had you loved but me!

We had stood as the sure stars stand, and moved
As the moon moves, loving the world; and seen
Grief collapse as a thing disproved,
Death consume as a thing unclean.
Twain halves of a perfect heart, made fast
Soul to soul while the years fell past;
Had you loved me once, as you have not loved;
Had the chance been with us that has not been.

I have put my days and dreams out of mind,
Days that are over, dreams that are done.
Though we seek life through, we shall surely find
There is none of them clear to us now, not one.
But clear are these things; the grass and the sand
Where, sure as the eyes reach, ever at hand,
With lips wide open and face burnt blind,
The strong sea-daisies feast on the sun.

The low downs lean to the sea; the stream,
One loose thin pulseless tremulous vein,
Rapid and vivid and dumb as a dream,
Works downward, sick of the sun and the rain;
No wind is rough with the rank rare flowers;
The sweet sea, mother of loves and hours,
Shudders and shines as the gray winds gleam,
Turning her smile to a fugitive pain.

Mother of loves that are swift to fade,
Mother of mutable winds and hours.
A barren mother, a mother-maid,
Cold and clean as her faint salt flowers.

I would we twain were even as she,
Lost in the night and the light of the sea,
Where faint sounds falter and wan beams wade,
Break, and are broken, and shed into showers.

The loves and hours of the life of a man,
They are swift and sad, being born of the sea.
Hours that rejoice and regret for a span,
Born with a man's breath, mortal as he;
Loves that are lost ere they come to birth,
Weeds of the wave, without fruit upon earth.
I lose what I long for, save what I can,
My love, my love, and no love for me!

It is not much that a man can save
On the sands of life, in the straits of time,
Who swims in sight of the great third wave
That never a swimmer shall cross or climb.
Some waif washed up with the strays and spars
That ebb-tide shows to the shore and the stars;
Weed from the water, grass from a grave,
A broken blossom, a ruined rhyme.

There will no man do for your sake, I think,
What I would have done for the least word said.
I had wrung life dry for your lips to drink,
Broken it up for your daily bread:
Body for body and blood for blood,
As the flow of the full sea risen to flood
That yearns and trembles before it sink,
I had given, and lain down for you, glad and dead.

Yea, hope at highest and all her fruit,
And time at fullest and all his dower,
I had given you surely, and life to boot,
Were we once made one for a single hour.
But now, you are twain, you are cloven apart,
Flesh of his flesh, but heart of my heart;
And deep in one is the bitter root,
And sweet for one is the lifelong flower.

To have died if you cared I should die for you, clung
To my life if you bade me, played my part
As it pleased you—these were the thoughts that stung,
The dreams that smote with a keener dart

Than shafts of love or arrows of death ;
These were but as fire is, dust, or breath,
Or poisonous foam on the tender tongue
Of the little snakes that eat my heart.

I wish we were dead together to-day,
Lost sight of, hidden away out of sight,
Clasped and clothed in the cloven clay,
Out of the world's way, out of the light,
Out of the ages of worldly weather,
Forgotten of all men altogether,
As the world's first dead, taken wholly away,
Made one with death, filled full of the night.

How we should slumber, how we should sleep,
Far in the dark with the dreams and the dews
And dreaming, grow to each other, and weep,
Laugh low, live softly, murmur and muse ;
Yea, and it may be, struck through by the dream,
Feel the dust quicken and quiver, and seem
Alive as of old to the lips, and leap
Spirit to spirit as lovers use.

Sick dreams and sad of a dull delight ;
For what shall it profit when men are dead
To have dreamed, to have loved with the whole soul's
might,
To have looked for day when the day was fled ?
Let come what will, there is one thing worth,
To have had fair love in the life upon earth :
To have held love safe till the day grew night,
While skies had color and lips were red.

Would I lose you now ? would I take you then,
If I lose you now that my heart has need ?
And come what may after death to men,
What thing worth this will the dead years breed ?
Lose life, lose all ; but at least I know,
O sweet life's love, having loved you so,
Had I reached you on earth, I should lose not again,
In death nor life, nor in dream or deed.

Yea, I know this well: were you once sealed mine,
Mine in the blood's beat, mine in the breath,
Mixed into me as honey in wine,
Not time that sayeth and gainsayeth,
Nor all strong things had severed us then;
Not wrath of gods, nor wisdom of men,
Nor all things earthly, nor all divine,
Nor joy nor sorrow, nor life nor death.

I had grown pure as the dawn and the dew,
You had grown strong as the sun or the sea.
But none shall triumph a whole life through:
For death is one, and the fates are three.
At the door of life, by the gate of breath,
There are worse things waiting for men than death;
Death could not sever my soul and you,
As these have severed your soul from me.

You have chosen and clung to he tchance they sent you,
Life sweet as perfume and pure as prayer.
But will it not one day in heaven repent you?
Will they solace you wholly, the days that were?
Will you lift up your eyes between sadness and bliss,
Meet mine, and see where the great love is,
And tremble and turn and be changed? Content you;
The gate is strait; I shall not be there.

But you, had you chosen, had you stretched hand,
Had you seen good such a thing were done,
I too might have stood with the souls that stand
In the sun's sight, clothed with the light of the sun;
But who now on earth need care how I live?
Have the high gods anything left to give,
Save dust and laurels and gold and sand?
Which gifts are goodly; but I will none.

O all fair lovers about the world,
There is none of you, none, that shall comfort me.
My thoughts are as dead things, wrecked and whirled
Round and round in a gulf of the sea;

And still, through the sound and the straining stream,
Through the coil and chafe, they gleam in a dream,
The bright fine lips so cruelly curled,
And strange swift eyes where the soul sits free.

Free, without pity, withheld from woe,
Ignorant; fair as the eyes are fair.
Would I have you change now, change at a blow,
Startled and stricken, awake and aware?
Yea, if I could, would I have you see
My very love of you filling me,
And know my soul to the quick, as I know
The likeness and look of your throat and hair?

I shall not change you. Nay, though I might,
Would I change my sweet one love with a word?
I had rather your hair should change in a night,
Clear now as the plume of a black bright bird;
Your face fail suddenly, cease, turn gray,
Die as a leaf that dies in a day.
I will keep my soul in a place out of sight,
Far off, where the pulse of it is not heard.

Far off it walks, in a bleak blown space,
Full of the sound of the sorrow of years.
I have woven a veil for the weeping face,
Whose lips have drunken the wine of tears;
I have found a way for the failing feet,
A place for slumber and sorrow to meet;
There is no rumor about the place,
Nor light, nor any that sees or hears.

I have hidden my soul out of sight, and said
"Let none take pity upon thee, none
Comfort thy crying: for lo, thou art dead,
Lie still now, safe out of sight of the sun.
Have I not built thee a grave, and wrought
Thy grave-clothes on thee of grievous thought,
With soft spun verses and tears unshed,
And sweet light visions of things undone?

"I have given thee garments and balm and myrrh
And gold, and beautiful burial things.
But thou, be at peace now, make no stir;
Is not thy grave as a royal king's?

Fret not thyself though the end were sore;
Sleep, be patient, vex me no more.
Sleep; what hast thou to do with her?
The eyes that weep, with the mouth that sings?"

Where the dead red leaves of the years lie rotten,
The cold old crimes and the deeds thrown by,
The misconceived and the misbegotten,
I would find a sin to do ere I die,
Sure to dissolve and destroy me all through,
That would set you higher in heaven, serve you
And leave you happy, when clean forgotten,
As a dead man out of mind, am I.

Your lithe hands draw me, your face burns through me,
I am swift to follow you, keen to see;
But love lacks might to redeem or undo me,
As I have been, I know I shall surely be;
"What should such fellows as I do?" Nay,
My part were worse if I chose to play;
For the worst is this after all; if they knew me,
Not a soul upon earth would pity me.

And I play not for pity of these; but you,
If you saw with your soul what man am I,
You would praise me at least that my soul all through
Clove to you, loathing the lives that lie;
The souls and lips that are bought and sold,
The smiles of silver and kisses of gold,
The lapdog loves that whine as they chew,
The little lovers that curse and cry.

There are fairer women, I hear; that may be;
But I, that I love you and find you fair,
Who are more than fair in my eyes if they be,
Do the high gods know or the great gods care?
Though the swords in my heart for one were seven,
Would the iron hollow of doubtful heaven,
That knows not itself whether night-time or day be,
Reverberate words and a foolish prayer?

I will go back to the great sweet mother,
Mother and lover of men, the sea.
I will go down to her, I and none other,
Close with her, kiss her and mix her with me;
Cling to her, strive with her, hold her fast;
O fair white mother, in days long past
Born without sister, born without brother,
Set free my soul as thy soul is free.

O fair green-girdled mother of mine,
Sea, that art clothed with the sun and the rain,
Thy sweet hard kisses are strong like wine,
Thy large embraces are keen like pain.
Save me and hide me with all thy waves,
Find me one grave of thy thousand graves,
Those pure cold populous graves of thine,
Wrought without hand in a world without stain.

I shall sleep, and move with the moving ships,
Change as the winds change, veer in the tide;
My lips will feast on the foam of thy lips,
I shall rise with thy rising, with thee subside;
Sleep, and not know if she be, if she were,
Filled full with life to the eyes and hair,
As a rose is fulfilled to the roseleaf tips
With splendid summer and perfume and pride.

This woven raiment of nights and days,
Were it once cast off and unwound from me,
Naked and glad would I walk in thy ways,
Alive and aware of thy ways and thee;
Clear of the whole world, hidden at home,
Clothed with the green and crowned with the foam,
A pulse of the life of thy straits and bays,
A vein in the heart of the streams of the sea.

Fair mother, fed with the lives of men,
Thou art subtle and cruel of heart, men say
Thou hast taken, and shalt not render again;
Thou art full of thy dead, and cold as they.
But death is the worst that comes of thee;
Thou art fed with our dead, O mother, O sea,
But when hast thou fed on our hearts? or when,
Having given us love, hast thou taken away?

O tender-hearted, O perfect lover,
Thy lips are bitter, and sweet thine heart.
The hopes that hurt and the dreams that hover,
Shall they not vanish away and apart?
But thou, thou art sure, thou art older than earth;
Thou are strong for death and fruitful of birth;
Thy depths conceal and thy gulfs discover;
From the first thou wert; in the end thou art.

And grief shall endure not forever, I know.
As things that are not shall these things be;
We shall live through seasons of sun and of snow,
And none be grievous as this to me.
We shall hear, as one in a trance that hears,
The sound of time, the rhyme of the years;
Wrecked hope and passionate pain will grow
As tender things of a spring-tide sea.

Sea-fruit that swings in the waves that hiss,
Drowned gold and purple and royal rings.
And all time past, was it all for this?
Times unforgotten, and treasures of things?
Swift years of liking and sweet long laughter,
That wist not well of the years thereafter
Till love woke, smitten at heart by a kiss,
With lips that trembled and trailing wings?

There lived a singer in France of old
By the tideless dolorous midland sea.
In a land of sand and ruin and gold
There shone one woman, and none but she.
And finding life for her love's sake fail,
Being fain to see her, he bade set sail,
Touched land, and saw her as life grew cold,
And praised God, seeing; and so died he.

Died, praising God for his gift and grace:
For she bowed down to him weeping, and said
"Live;" and her tears were shed on his face
Or ever the life in his face was shed.
The sharp tears fell through her hair, and stung
Once, and her close lips touched him and clung
Once, and grew one with his lips for a space;
And so drew back, and the man was dead.

O brother, the gods were good to you.
  Sleep, and be glad while the world endures.
Be well content as the years wear through
  Give thanks for life, and the loves and lures;
Give thanks for life, O brother, and death,
For the sweet last sound of her feet, her breath,
For gifts she gave you, gracious and few,
  Tears and kisses, that lady of yours.

Rest, and be glad of the gods; but I,
  How shall I praise them, or how take rest?
There is not room under all the sky
  For me that know not of worst or best,
Dream or desire of the days before,
Sweet things or bitterness, any more.
Love will not come to me now though I die,
  As love came close to you, breast to breast.

I shall never be friends again with roses;
  I shall loathe sweet tunes, where a note grown strong
Relents and recoils, and climbs and closes,
  As a wave of the sea turned back by song.
There are sounds where the soul's delight takes fire,
Face to face with its own desire;
A delight that rebels, a desire that reposes;
  I shall hate sweet music my whole life long.

The pulse of war and passion of wonder,
  The heavens that murmur, the sounds that shine,
The stars that sing and the loves that thunder,
  The music burning at heart like wine,
An armed archangel whose hands raise up
All senses mixed in the spirit's cup
Till flesh and spirit are molten in sunder—
  These things are over, and no more mine.

These were a part of the playing I heard
  Once, ere my love and my heart were at strife;
Love that sings and hath wings as a bird,
  Balm of the wound and heft of the knife.
Fairer than earth is the sea, and sleep
Than overwatching of eyes that weep,
Now time has done with his one sweet word,
  The wine and leaven of lovely life.

I shall go my ways, tread out my measure,
Fill the days of my daily breath
With fugitive things not good to treasure,
Do as the world doth, say as it saith ;
But if we had loved each other—O sweet,
Had you felt, lying under the palms of your feet,
The heart of my heart, beating harder with pleasure
To feel you tread it to dust and death—

Ah, had I not taken my life up and given
All that life gives and the years let go,
The wine and honey, the balm and leaven,
The dreams reared high and the hopes brought low?
Come life, come death, not a word be said ;
Should I lose you living, and vex you dead ?
I never shall tell you on earth ; and in heaven,
If I cry to you then, will you hear or know ?

LES NOYADES.

Whatever a man of the sons of men
Shall say to his heart of the lords above,
They have shown man verily, once and again,
Marvellous mercies and infinite love.

In the wild fifth year of the change of things,
When France was glorious and blood-red, fair
With dust of battle and deaths of kings,
A queen of men, with helmeted hair ;

Carrier came down to the Loire and slew,
Till all the ways and the waves waxed red :
Bound and drowned, slaying two by two,
Maidens and young men, naked and wed.

They brought on a day to his judgment-place
One rough with labor and red with fight,
And a lady noble by name and face,
Faultless, a maiden, wonderful, white.

She knew not, being for shame's sake blind,
If his eyes were hot on her face hard by.
And the judge bade strip and ship them, and bind
Bosom to bosom, to drown and die.

The white girl winced and whitened ; but he
Caught fire, waxed bright as a great bright flame
Seen with thunder far out on the sea,
Laughed hard as the glad blood went and came.

Twice his lips quailed with delight, then said,
"I have but a word to you all, one word
Bear with me ; surely I am but dead ; "
And all they laughed and mocked him and heard.

"Judge, when they open the judgment-roll
I will stand upright before God and pray :
'Lord God, have mercy on one man's soul,
For his mercy was great upon earth, I say.

"'Lord, if I loved thee—Lord, if I served—
If these who darkened thy fair Son's face
I fought with, sparing not one, nor swerved
A hand's-breadth, Lord, in the perilous place—

"'I pray thee say to this man, O Lord,
Sit thou for him at my feet on a throne.
I will face thy wrath, though it bite as a sword,
And my soul shall burn for his soul, and atone.

"'For, Lord, thou knowest, O God most wise,
How gracious on earth were his deeds toward me.
Shall this be a small thing in thine eyes,
That is greater in mine than the whole great sea ?'

"I have loved this woman my whole life long,
And even for love's sake when have I said
'I love you ?' when have I done you wrong,
Living ? but now I shall have you dead.

"Yea, now, do I bid you love me, love ?
Love me or loathe, we are one not twain.
But God be praised in his heaven above
For this my pleasure and that my pain !

"For never a man, being mean like me,
Shall die like me till the whole world dies.
I shall drown with her, laughing for love; and she
Mix with me, touching me, lips and eyes.

"Shall she not know me and see me all through,
Me, on whose heart as a worm she trod?
You have given me, God requite it you,
What man yet never was given of God."

O sweet one love, O my life's delight,
Dear, though the days have divided us,
Lost beyond hope, taken far out of sight,
Not twice in the world shall the gods do thus.

Had it been so hard for my love? but I,
Though the gods gave all that a god can give,
I had chosen rather the gift to die,
Cease, and be glad above all that live.

For the Loire would have driven us down to the sea,
And the sea would have pitched us from shoal to shoal;
And I should have held you, and you held me,
As flesh holds flesh, and the soul the soul.

Could I change you, help you to love me, sweet,
Could I give you the love that would sweeten death,
We should yield, go down, locked hands and feet,
Die, drown together, and breath catch breath;

But you would have felt my soul in a kiss,
And known that once if I loved you well;
And I would have given my soul for this
To burn forever in burning hell.

A BALLAD OF LIFE.

I FOUND in dreams a place of wind and flowers,
Full of sweet trees and color of glad grass,
In midst whereof there was
A lady clothed like summer with sweet hours.

Her beauty, fervent as a fiery moon,
Made my blood burn and swoon
Like a flame rained upon.
Sorrow had filled her shaken eyelids blue,
And her mouth's sad red heavy rose all through
Seemed sad with glad things gone.

She held a little cithern by the strings,
Shaped heartwise, strung with subtle-colored hair
Of some dead lute player
That in dead years had done delicious things.
The seven strings were named accordingly ;
The first string charity,
The second tenderness,
The rest were pleasure, sorrow, sleep, and sin,
And loving kindness, that is pity's kin
And is most pitiless.

There were three men with her, each garmented
With gold and shod with gold upon the feet ;
And with plucked ears of wheat.
The first man's hair was wound upon his head :
His face was red, and his mouth curled and sad ;
All his gold garment had
Pale stains of dust and rust.
A riven hood was pulled across his eyes ;
The token of him being upon this wise
Made for a sign of Lust.

The next was Shame, with hollow heavy face
Colored like green wood when flame kindles it.
He hath such feeble feet
They may not well endure in any place.
His face was full of gray old miseries,
And all his blood's increase
Was even increase of pain.
The last was Fear, that is akin to Death ;
He is Shame's friend, and always as Shame saith
Fear answers him again.

My soul said in me ; This is marvellous,
Seeing the air's face is not so delicate
Nor the sun's grace so great,
If sin and she be kin or amorous.

And seeing where maidens served her on their knees
I bade one crave of these
To know the cause thereof.
Then Fear said : I am Pity that was dead.
And Shame said: I am Sorrow comforted.
And Lust said : I am Love.

Thereat her hands began a lute-playing
And her sweet mouth a song in a strange tongue ;
And all the while she sung
There was no sound but long tears following
Long tears upon men's faces, waxen white
With extreme sad delight.
But those three following men
Became as men raised up among the dead ;
Great glad mouths open, and fair cheeks made red
With child's blood come again.

Then I said : Now assuredly I see
My lady is perfect, and transfigureth
All sin and sorrow and death,
Making them fair as her own eyelids be,
Or lips wherein my whole soul's life abides ;
Or as her sweet white sides
And bosom carved to kiss.
Now therefore, if her pity further me,
Doubtless for her sake all my days shall be
As righteous as she is.

Forth, ballad, and take roses in both arms,
Even till the top rose touch thee in the throat
Where the least thornprick harms ;
And girdled in thy golden singing-coat,
Come thou before my lady and say this ;
Borgia, thy gold hair's color burns in me,
Thy mouth makes beat my blood in feverish rhymes ;
Therefore so many as these roses be,
Kiss me so many times.
Then it may be, seeing how sweet she is,
That she will stoop herself none otherwise
Than a blown vine-branch doth,
And kiss thee with soft laughter on thine eyes,
Ballad, and on thy mouth.

A BALLAD OF DEATH.

KNEEL down, fair Love, and fill thyself with tears,
Girdle thyself with sighing for a girth
Upon the sides of mirth,
Cover thy lips and eyelids, let thine ears
Be filled with rumor of people sorrowing ;
Make thee soft raiment out of woven sighs
Upon the flesh to cleave,
Set pains therein and many a grievous thing,
And many sorrows after each his wise
For armlet and for gorget and for sleeve.

O Love's lute heard about the lands of death,
Left hanged upon the trees that were therein ;
O Love and Time and Sin,
Three singing mouths that mourn now under breath,
Three lovers, each one evil spoken of ;
O smitten lips wherethrough this voice of mine
Came softer with her praise ;
Abide a little for our lady's love.
The kisses of her mouth were more than wine,
And more than peace the passage of her days.

O Love, thou knowest if she were good to see.
O Time, thou shalt not find in any land
Till, cast out of thine hand,
The sunlight and the moonlight fail from thee,
Another woman fashioned like as this.
O Sin, thou knowest that all thy shame in her
Was made a goodly thing ;
Yea, she caught Shame and shamed him with her kiss,
With her fair kiss, and lips much lovelier
Than lips of amorous roses in late spring.

By night there stood over against my bed
Queen Venus with a hood striped gold and black,
Both sides drawn fully back
From brows wherein the sad blood failed of red,
And temples drained of purple and full of death.
Her curled hair had the wave of sea-water
And the sea's gold in it.

Her eyes were as a dove's that sickeneth.
Strewn dust of gold she had shed over her,
And pearl and purple and amber on her feet.

Upon her raiment of dyed sendaline
Were painted all the secret ways of love
And covered things thereof,
That hold delight as grape-flowers hold their wine;
Red mouths of maidens and red feet of doves,
And brides that kept within the bride-chamber
Their garment of soft shame,
And weeping faces of the wearied loves
That swoon in sleep and awake wearier,
With heat of lips and hair shed out like flame.

The tears that through her eyelids fell on me
Made mine own bitter where they ran between
As blood had fallen therein,
She saying; Arise, lift up thine eyes and see
If any glad thing be or any good
Now the best thing is taken forth of us;
Even she to whom all praise
Was as one flower in a great multitude,
One glorious flower of many and glorious,
One day found gracious among many days:

Even she whose handmaiden was Love—to whom
At kissing times across her stateliest bed
Kings bowed themselves and shed
Pale wine, and honey with the honeycomb,
And spikenard bruised for a burnt-offering;
Even she between whose lips the kiss became
As fire and frankincense;
Whose hair was as gold raiment on a king,
Whose eyes were as the morning purged with flame,
Whose eyelids as sweet savor issuing thence.

Then I beheld, and lo on the other side
My lady's likeness crowned and robed and dead.
Sweet still, but now not red,
Was the shut mouth whereby men lived and died.
And sweet, but emptied of the blood's blue shade,

The great curled eyelids that withheld her eyes.
And sweet, but like spoilt gold,
The weight of color in her tresses weighed.
And sweet, but as a vesture with new dyes,
The body that was clothed with love of old.

Ah ! that my tears filled all her woven hair
And all the hollow bosom of her gown—
Ah ! that my tears ran down
Even to the place where many kisses were,
Even where her parted breast-flowers have place,
Even where they are cloven apart—who knows not this ?
Ah ! the flowers cleave apart
And their sweet fills the tender interspace ;
Ah ! the leaves grown thereof were things to kiss
Ere their fine gold was tarnished at the heart.

Ah ! in the days when God did good to me,
Each part about her was a righteous thing ;
Her mouth an almsgiving,
The glory of her garments charity,
The beauty of her bosom a good deed,
In the good days when God kept sight of us ;
Love lay upon her eyes,
And on that hair whereof the world takes heed :
And all her body was more virtuous
Than souls of women fashioned otherwise.

Now, ballad, gather poppies in thine hands
And sheaves of brier and many rusted sheaves
Rain-rotten in rank lands,
Waste marigold and late unhappy leaves
And grass that fades ere any of it be mown ;
And when thy bosom is filled full thereof
Seek out Death's face ere the light altereth,
And say " My master that was thrall to Love
Is become thrall to Death."
Bow down before him, ballad, sigh and groan,
But make no sojourn in thy outgoing ;
For haply it may be
That when thy feet return at evening
Death shall come in with thee.

A LEAVE-TAKING.

Let us go hence, my songs: she will not hear;
Let us go hence together without fear.
Keep silence now, for singing-time is over,
And over all old things and all things dear.
She loves not you nor me as all we love her:
Yea, though we sang as angels in her ear,
She would not hear.

Let us rise up and part: she will not know.
Let us go seaward as the great winds go,
Full of blown sand and foam. What help is there?
There is no help, for all these things are so,
And all the world is bitter as a tear.
And how these things are, though ye strove to show,
She would not know.

Let us go home and hence: she will not weep.
We gave love many dreams and days to keep,
Flowers without scent, and fruits that would not grow,
Saying, "If thou wilt, thrust in thy sickle, and reap."
All is reaped now; no grass is left to mow:
And we that sowed, though all we fell on sleep,
She would not weep.

Let us go hence and rest: she will not love.
She shall not hear us if we sing hereof,
Nor see love's ways, how sore they are and steep.
Come hence, let be, lie still; it is enough.
Love is a barren sea, bitter and deep;
And, though she saw all heaven in flower above,
She would not love.

Let us give up, go down: she will not care.
Though all the stars made gold of all the air,
And the sea moving saw before it move
One moon-flower making all the foam-flowers fair;
Though all those waves went over us, and drove
Deep down the stifling lips and drowning hair,—
She would not care.

Let us go hence, go hence: she will not see.
Sing all once more together; surely she,
She too, remembering days and words that were,
Will turn a little toward us, sighing; but we,
We are hence, we are gone, as though we had not been there.
Nay, and though all men seeing had pity on me,
She would not see.

ITYLUS.

Swallow, my sister, O sister swallow,
How can thine heart be full of the spring?
A thousand summers are over and dead.
What hast thou found in the spring to follow?
What hast thou found in thine heart to sing?
What wilt thou do when the summer is shed?

O swallow, sister, O fair swift swallow,
Why wilt thou fly after spring to the south,
The soft south whither thine heart is set?
Shall not the grief of the old time follow?
Shall not the song thereof cleave to thy mouth?
Hast thou forgotten ere I forget?

Sister, my sister, O fleet sweet swallow,
Thy way is long to the sun and the south;
But I, fulfilled of my heart's desire,
Shedding my song upon height, upon hollow,
From tawny body and sweet small mouth
Feed the heart of the night with fire.

I the nightingale all spring through,
O swallow, sister, O changing swallow,
All spring through till the spring be done,
Clothed with the light of the night on the dew,
Sing, while the hours and the wild birds follow,
Take flight and follow and find the sun.

Sister, my sister, O soft, light swallow,
Though all things feast in the spring's guest-chamber,
How hast thou heart to be glad thereof yet?
For where thou fliest I shall not follow,
Till life forget, and death remember,
Till thou remember, and I forget.

Swallow, my sister, O singing swallow,
I know not how thou hast heart to sing.
Hast thou the heart? is it all past over?
Thy lord the summer is good to follow,
And fair the feet of thy lover the spring;
But what wilt thou say to the spring thy lover?

O swallow, sister, O fleeting swallow,
My heart in me is a molten ember,
And over my head the waves have met.
But thou wouldst tarry, or I would follow,
Could I forget, or thou remember,
Couldst thou remember, and I forget.

O sweet stray sister, O shifting swallow,
The heart's division divideth us.
Thy heart is light as a leaf of a tree;
But mine goes forth, among sea-gulfs hollow,
To the place of the slaying of Itylus,
The feast of Daulis, the Thracian sea.

O swallow, sister, O rapid swallow,
I pray thee sing not a little space.
Are not the roofs and the lintels wet?
The woven web that was plain to follow,
The small slain body, the flower-like face,
Can I remember if thou forget?

O sister, sister, thy first-begotten!
The hands that cling and the feet that follow,
The voice of the child's blood crying yet,
Who hath remembered me? Who hath forgotten?
Thou hast forgotten, O summer swallow,
But the world shall end when I forget.

RONDEL.

THESE many years since we began to be,
What have the gods done with us? what with me,
What with my love? They have shown me fates and fears,
Harsh springs, and fountains bitterer than the sea,
Grief a fixed star, and joy a vane that veers,
These many years.

With her, my love, with her have they done well?
But who shall answer for her? who shall tell
Sweet things or sad, such things as no man hears?
May no tears fall, if no tears ever fell,
From eyes more dear to me than starriest spheres
These many years!

But if tears ever touched, for any grief,
Those eyelids folded like a white-rose leaf,
Deep double shells wherethrough the eye-flower peers,
Let them weep once more only, sweet and brief,
Brief tears and bright, for one who gave her tears
These many years.

A LITANY.

FIRST ANTIPHONE.

ALL the bright lights of heaven
I will make dark over thee;
One night shall be as seven,
That its skirts may cover thee;
I will send on thy strong men a sword,
On thy remnant a rod:
Ye shall know that I am the Lord,
Saith the Lord God.

SECOND ANTIPHONE.

All the bright lights of heaven
Thou hast made dark over us;
One night has been as seven,
That its skirt might cover us;

Thou hast sent on our strong men a sword,
On our remnant a rod :
We know that thou art the Lord,
O Lord our God !

THIRD ANTIPHONE.

As the tresses and wings of the wind
Are scattered and shaken,
I will scatter all them that have sinned :
There shall none be taken ;
As a sower that scattereth seed,
So will I scatter them ;
As one breaketh and shattereth a reed,
I will break and shatter them.

FOURTH ANTIPHONE.

As the wings and the locks of the wind
Are scattered and shaken,
Thou hast scattered all them that have sinned :
There was no man taken ;
As a sower that scattereth seed,
So hast thou scattered us ;
As one breaketh and shattereth a reed,
Thou hast broken and shattered us.

FIFTH ANTIPHONE.

From all thy lovers that love thee,
I God will sunder thee ;
I will make darkness above thee,
And thick darkness under thee ;
Before me goeth a light,
Behind me a sword :
Shall a remnant find grace in my sight ?
I am the Lord.

SIXTH ANTIPHONE.

From all our lovers that love us,
Thou God didst sunder us ;
Thou madest darkness above us,
And thick darkness under us ;

Thou hast kindled thy wrath for a light,
And made ready thy sword :
Let a remnant find grace in thy sight,
We beseech thee, O Lord !

SEVENTH ANTIPHONE.

Wilt thou bring fine gold for a payment
For sins on this wise ?
For the glittering of raiment,
And the shining of eyes,
For the painting of faces,
And the sundering of trust,
For the sins of thine high places
And delight of thy lust ?

For your high things ye shall have lowly,
Lamentation for song ;
For, behold, I God am holy,
I the Lord am strong.
Ye shall seek me, and shall not reach me
Till the wine-press be trod ;
In that hour ye shall turn, and beseech me,
Saith the Lord God.

EIGHTH ANTIPHONE.

Not with fine gold for a payment,
But with coin of sighs,
But with rending of raiment,
And with weeping of eyes,
But with shame of stricken faces,
And with strewing of dust,
For the sin of stately places
And lordship of lust ;

With voices of men made lowly,
Made empty of song,
O Lord God most holy,
O God most strong,
We reach out hands to reach thee
Ere the wine-press be trod ;
We beseech thee, O Lord, we beseech thee,
O Lord our God !

NINTH ANTIPHONE.

In that hour thou shalt say to the night,
  Come down and cover us ;
To the cloud on thy left and thy right,
  Be thou spread over us.
A snare shall be as thy mother,
  And a curse thy bride ;
Thou shalt put her away, and another
  Shall lie by thy side.

Thou shalt neither rise up by day,
  Nor lie down by night.
Would God it were dark ! thou shalt say ;
  Would God it were light !
And the sight of thine eyes shall be made
  As the burning of fire ;
And thy soul shall be sorely afraid
  For thy soul's desire.

Ye whom your lords loved well,
  Putting silver and gold on you,
The inevitable hell
  Shall surely take hold on you ;
Your gold shall be for a token,
  Your staff for a rod ;
With the breaking of bands ye are broken
  Saith the Lord God.

TENTH ANTIPHONE.

In our sorrow we said to the night,
  Fall down and cover us ;
To the darkness at left and at right,
  Be thou shed over us.
We had breaking of spirit to mother,
  And cursing to bride ;
And one was slain, and another
  Stood up at our side.

We could not arise by day,
  Nor lie down by night ;
Thy sword was sharp in our way,
  Thy word in our sight ;

The delight of our eyelids was made
As the burning of fire,
And our souls became sorely afraid
For our soul's desire.

We whom the world loved well,
Laying silver and gold on us,
The kingdom of death and of hell
Riseth up to take hold on us;
Our gold is turned to a token,
Our staff to a rod:
Yet shalt thou bind them up that were broken,
O Lord our God!

A LAMENTATION.

I.

Who hath known the ways of time,
Or trodden behind his feet?
There is no such man among men.
For chance overcomes him, or crime
Changes; for all things sweet
In time wax bitter again.
Who shall give sorrow enough,
Or who the abundance of tears?
Mine eyes are heavy with love,
And a sword gone through mine ears,
A sound like a sword and fire,
For pity, for great desire;
Who shall insure me thereof,
Lest I die, being full of my fears?

Who hath known the ways and the wrath,
The sleepless spirit, the root
And blossom of evil will,
The divine device of a god?
Who shall behold it, or hath?
The twice-tongued prophets are mute,
The many speakers are still;
No foot has travelled or trod,

No hand has meted, his path.
Man's fate is a blood-red fruit,
And the mighty gods have their fill
And relax not the rein, or the rod.

Ye were mighty in heart from of old,
Ye slew with the spear, and are slain.
Keen after heat is the cold,
Sore after summer is rain,
And melteth man to the bone.
As water he weareth away,
As a flower, as an hour in a day,
Fallen from laughter to moan.
But my spirit is shaken with fear
Lest an evil thing begin,
New-born, a spear for a spear,
And one for another sin.
Or ever our tears began,
It was known from of old and said;
One law for a living man,
And another law for the dead
For these are fearful and sad,
Vain, and things without breath;
While he lives let a man be glad,
For none hath joy of his death.

II.

Who hath known the pain, the old pain of earth,
Or all the travail of the sea,
The many ways and waves, the birth
Fruitless, the labor nothing worth?
Who hath known, who knoweth, O gods? not we.

There is none shall say he hath seen,
There is none he hath known.
Though he saith, Lo, a lord have I been,
I have reaped and sown;
I have seen the desire of mine eyes,
The beginning of love,
The season of kisses and sighs,
And the end thereof.

I have known the ways of the sea,
All the perilous ways;
Strange winds have spoken with me,
And the tongues of strange days.
I have hewn the pine for ships;
Where steeds run arow,
I have seen from their bridled lips
Foam blown as the snow.
With snapping of chariot-poles
And with straining of oars
I have grazed in the race the goals,
In the storm the shores;
As a greave is cleft with an arrow
At the joint of the knee,
I have cleft through the sea-straits narrow
To the heart of the sea.
When air was smitten in sunder,
I have watched on high
The ways of the stars and the thunder
In the night of the sky;
Where the dark brings forth light as a flower,
As from lips that dissever;
One abideth the space of an hour,
One endureth forever.
Lo, what hath he seen or known
Of the way and the wave
Unbeholden, unsailed-on, unsown,
From the breast to the grave?

Or ever the stars were made, or skies,
Grief was born, and the kinless night,
Mother of gods without form or name.
And light is born out of heaven, and dies,
And one day knows not another's light;
But night is one, and her shape the same.
But dumb the goddesses underground
Wait, and we hear not on earth if their feet
Rise, and the night wax loud with their wings;
Dumb, without word or shadow of sound;
And sift in scales, and winnow as wheat
Men's souls, and sorrow of manifold things.

III.

Nor less of grief than ours
The gods wrought long ago
To bruise men one by one;
But with the incessant hours
Fresh grief and greener woe
Spring, as the sudden sun
Year after year makes flowers;
And these die down and grow,
And the next year lacks none.

As these men sleep, have slept
The old heroes in time fled,
No dream-divided sleep;
And holier eyes have wept
Than ours, when on her dead
Gods have seen Thetis weep,
With heavenly hair far-swept
Back, heavenly hands out-spread
Round what she could not keep,

Could not one day withhold,
One night; and like as these
White ashes of no weight,
Held not his urn the cold
Ashes of Heracles?
For all things born, one gate
Opens,—no gate of gold;
Opens; and no man sees
Beyond the gods and fate.

ANIMA ANCEPS.

Till death have broken
Sweet life's love-token,
Till all be spoken
That shall be said,
What dost thou praying,
O soul, and playing
With song and saying,
Things flown and fled?

For this we know not—
That fresh springs flow not
And fresh griefs grow not
  When men are dead;
When strange years cover
Lover and lover,
And joys are over,
  And tears are shed.

If one day's sorrow
Mar the day's morrow;
If man's life borrow,
  And man's death pay;
If souls once taken,
If lives once shaken,
Arise, awaken,
  By night, by day,—
Why with strong crying
And years of sighing,
Living and dying,
  Fast ye and pray?
For all your weeping,
Waking and sleeping,
Death comes to reaping,
  And takes away.
Though time rend after
Roof-tree from rafter,
A little laughter
  Is much more worth
Than thus to measure
The hour, the treasure,
The pain, the pleasure,
  The death, the birth;
Grief, when days alter,
Like joy shall falter;
Song-book and psalter,
  Mourning and mirth.
Live like the swallow;
Seek not to follow,
Where earth is hollow,
  Under the earth.

SONG BEFORE DEATH.

(FROM THE FRENCH.)

1795.

SWEET mother, in a minute's span
Death parts thee and my love of thee:
Sweet love, that yet art living man,
Come back, true love, to comfort me.
Back, ah, come back! ah, wellaway!
But my love comes not any day.

As roses, when the warm West blows,
Break to full flower, and sweeten spring,
My soul would break to a glorious rose
In such wise at his whispering.
In vain I listen; wellaway!
My love says nothing any day.

You that will weep for pity of love
On the low place where I am lain,
I pray you, having wept enough,
Tell him for whom I bore such pain
That he was yet, ah! wellaway!
My true love to my dying day.

ROCOCO.

TAKE hands, and part with laughter;
Touch lips, and part with tears:
Once more and no more after,
Whatever comes with years.
We twain shall not re-measure
The ways that left us twain,
Nor crush the lees of pleasure
From sanguine grapes of pain.

We twain once well in sunder,
What will the mad gods do
For hate with me, I wonder,
Or what for love with you?

Forget them till November,
And dream there's April yet;
Forget that I remember,
And dream that I forget.

Time found our tired love sleeping,
And kissed away his breath;
But what should we do weeping
Though light love sleep to death?
We have drained his lips at leisure,
Till there's not left to drain
A single sob of pleasure,
A single pulse of pain.

Dream that the lips once breathless
Might quicken if they would;
Say that the soul is deathless;
Dream that the gods are good;
Say March may wed September,
And time divorce regret:
But not that you remember,
And not that I forget.

We have heard from hidden places
What love scarce lives and hears;
We have seen on fervent faces
The pallor of strange tears;
We have trod the wine-vat's treasure,
Whence, ripe to steam and stain,
Foams round the feet of pleasure
The blood-red must of pain.

Remembrance may recover,
And time bring back to time
The name of your first lover,
The ring of my first rhyme;
But rose-leaves of December
The frosts of June shall fret,
The day that you remember,
The day that I forget.

The snake that hides and hisses
In heaven, we twain have known
The grief of cruel kisses,
The joy whose mouth makes moan;

The pulse's pause and measure,
  Where in one furtive vein
Throbs through the heart of pleasure
  The purpler blood of pain.

We have done with tears and treasons
  And love for treason's sake;
Room for the swift new seasons,
  The years that burn and break.
Dismantle and dismember
  Men's days and dreams, Juliette;
For love may not remember,
  But time will not forget.

Life treads down love in flying,
  Time withers him at root;
Bring all dead things and dying,
  Reaped sheaf and ruined fruit,
Where, crushed by three days' pressure,
  Our three days' love lies slain;
And earlier leaf of pleasure,
  And latter flower of pain.

Breathe close upon the ashes,
  It may be flame will leap;
Unclose the soft close lashes,
  Lift up the lids, and weep.
Light love's extinguished ember,
  Let one tear leave it wet,
For one that you remember,
  And ten that you forget.

A BALLAD OF BURDENS.

The burden of fair women. Vain delight,
  And love self-slain in some sweet shameful way,
And sorrowful old age that comes by night
  As a thief comes that has no heart by day,
  And change that finds fair cheeks and leaves them gray,
And weariness that keeps awake for hire,
  And grief that says what pleasure used to say:
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of bought kisses. This is sore,
A burden without fruit in childbearing ;
Between the nightfall and the dawn threescore,
Threescore between the dawn and evening.
The shuddering in thy lips, the shuddering
In thy sad eyelids tremulous like fire,
Makes love seem shameful and a wretched thing :
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of sweet speeches. Nay, kneel down,
Cover thy head, and weep ; for verily
These market-men that buy thy white and brown
In the last days shall take no thought for thee ;
In the last days like earth thy face shall be,
Yea, like sea-marsh made thick with brine and mire,
Sad with sick leavings of the sterile sea :
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of long living. Thou shalt fear
Waking, and sleeping mourn upon thy bed ;
And say at night, "Would God the day were here!"
And say at dawn, "Would God the day were dead!"
With weary days thou shalt be clothed and fed,
And wear remorse of heart for thine attire,
Pain for thy girdle, and sorrow upon thine head :
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of bright colors. Thou shalt see
Gold tarnished, and the gray above the green ;
And as the thing thou seest thy face shall be,
And no more as the thing beforetime seen.
And thou shalt say of mercy, "It hath been ;"
And living, watch the old lips and loves expire,
And talking, tears shall take thy breath between :
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of sad sayings. In that day
Thou shalt tell all thy days and hours, and tell
Thy times and ways and words of love, and say
How one was dear, and one desirable,
And sweet was life to hear and sweet to smell ;

But now with lights reverse the old hours retire,
And the last hour is shod with fire from hell :
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of four seasons. Rain in spring,
White rain and wind among the tender trees ;
A summer of green sorrows gathering ;
Rank autumn in a mist of miseries,
With sad face set towards the year, that sees
The charred ash drop out of the dropping pyre,
And winter wan with many maladies ;
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of dead faces. Out of sight
And out of love, beyond the reach of hands,
Changed in the changing of the dark and light,
They walk and weep about the barren lands
Where no seed is, nor any garner stands,
Where in short breaths the doubtful days respire,
And time's turned glass lets through the sighing sands :
This is the end of every man's desire.

The burden of much gladness. Life and lust
Forsake thee, and the face of thy delight ;
And underfoot the heavy hour strews dust,
And overhead strange weathers burn and bite ;
And where the red was, lo the bloodless white ;
And where truth was, the likeness of a liar ;
And where day was, the likeness of the night :
This is the end of every man's desire.

L'ENVOY.

Princes, and ye whom pleasure quickeneth,
Heed well this rhyme before your pleasure tire ;
For life is sweet, but after life is death.
This is the end of every man's desire.

BEFORE THE MIRROR.

(VERSES WRITTEN UNDER A PICTURE.)

(INSCRIBED TO J. A. WHISTLER.)

I.

WHITE rose in red rose-garden
  Is not so white ;
Snowdrops that plead for pardon
  And pine for fright
Because the hard East blows
Over their maiden rows,
  Grow not as this face grows from pale to bright.

Behind the veil, forbidden,
  Shut up from sight,
Love, is there sorrow hidden,
  Is there delight ?
Is joy thy dower or grief,
White rose of weary leaf,
  Late rose whose life is brief, whose loves are light ?

Soft snows, that hard winds harden
  Till each flake bite,
Fill all the flowerless garden
  Whose flowers took flight
Long since when summer ceased,
And men rose up from feast,
  And warm west wind grew east, and warm day night.

II.

" Come snow, come wind or thunder
  High up in air,
I watch my face, and wonder
  At my bright hair ;
Naught else exalts or grieves
The rose at heart, that heaves
  With love of her own leaves and lips that pair.

"She knows not loves that kissed her
She knows not where:
Art thou the ghost, my sister,
White sister there,
Am I the ghost, who knows?
My hand, a fallen rose,
Lies snow-white on white snows, and takes no care.

"I cannot see what pleasures
Or what pains were;
What pale new loves and treasures
New years will bear;
What beam will fall, what shower,
What grief or joy for dower:
But one thing knows the flower,—the flower is fair."

III.

Glad, but not flushed with gladness,
Since joys go by;
Sad, but not bent with sadness,
Since sorrows die;
Deep in the gleaming glass
She sees all past things pass,
And all sweet life that was lie down and lie.

There glowing ghosts of flowers
Draw down, draw nigh;
And wings of swift spent hours
Take flight and fly;
She sees by formless gleams,
She hears across cold streams,
Dead mouths of many dreams that sing and sigh.

Face fallen and white throat lifted,
With sleepless eye
She sees old loves that drifted,
She knew not why,—
Old loves and faded fears
Float down a stream that hears
The flowing of all men's tears beneath the sky.

IN MEMORY OF WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR.

Back to the flower-town, side by side,
The bright months bring,
New-born, the bridegroom and the bride,
Freedom and spring.

The sweet land laughs from sea to sea,
Filled full of sun;
All things come back to her, being free,—
All things but one.

In many a tender wheaten plot
Flowers that were dead
Live, and old suns revive; but not
That holier head.

By this white wandering waste of sea,
Far north, I hear
One face shall never turn to me
As once this year;

Shall never smile and turn and rest
On mine as there,
Nor one most sacred hand be prest
Upon my hair.

I came as one whose thoughts half linger,
Half run before;
The youngest to the oldest singer
That England bore.

I found him whom I shall not find
Till all grief end,
In holiest age our mightiest mind,
Father and friend.

But thou, if any thing endure,
If hope there be,
O spirit that man's life left pure,
Man's death set free,

Not with disdain of days that were
  Look earthward now:
Let dreams revive the reverend hair,
  The imperial brow;

Come back in sleep, for in the life
  Where thou art not
We find none like thee. Time and strife
  And the world's lot

Move thee no more; but love at least,
  And reverent heart,
May move thee, royal and released,
  Soul, as thou art.

And thou, his Florence, to thy trust
  Receive and keep,
Keep safe his dedicated dust,
  His sacred sleep.

So shall thy lovers, come from far,
  Mix with thy name,
As morning-star with evening-star,
  His faultless fame.

A SONG IN TIME OF ORDER.

1852.

Push hard across the sand,
  For the salt wind gathers breath;
Shoulder and wrist and hand,
  Push hard as the push of death.

The wind is as iron that rings,
  The foam-heads loosen and flee;
It swells and welters and swings,
  The pulse of the tide of the sea.

And up on the yellow cliff
  The long corn flickers and shakes;
Push, for the wind holds stiff,
  And the gunwale dips and rakes.

Good hap to the fresh fierce weather,
The quiver and beat of the sea!
While three men hold together,
The kingdoms are less by three.

Out to the sea with her there,
Out with her over the sand,
Let the kings keep the earth for their share!
We have done with the sharers of land.

They have tied the world in a tether,
They have bought over God with a fee;
While three men hold together,
The kingdoms are less by three.

We have done with the kisses that sting,
The thief's mouth red from the feast,
The blood on the hands of the king,
And the lie at the lips of the priest.

Will they tie the winds in a tether,
Put a bit in the jaws of the sea?
While three men hold together,
The kingdoms are less by three.

Let our flag run out straight in the wind!
The old red shall be floated again
When the ranks that are thin shall be thinned,
When the names that were twenty are ten;

When the devil's riddle is mastered,
And the galley-bench creaks with a Pope,
We shall see Buonaparte the bastard
Kick heels with his throat in a rope.

While the shepherd sets wolves on his sheep,
And the emperor halters his kine,
While Shame is a watchman asleep,
And Faith is a keeper of swine,—

Let the wind shake our flag like a feather,
Like the plumes of the foam of the sea!
While three men hold together,
The kingdoms are less by three.

All the world has its burdens to bear,
From Cayenne to the Austrian whips;
Forth, with the rain in our hair
And the salt sweet foam in our lips;

In the teeth of the hard glad weather,
In the blown wet face of the sea;
While three men hold together,
The kingdoms are less by three.

A SONG IN TIME OF REVOLUTION.

1860.

THE heart of the rulers is sick, and the high-priest covers his head,
For this is the song of the quick that is heard in the ears of the dead.

The poor and the halt and the blind are keen and mighty and fleet:
Like the noise of the blowing of wind is the sound of the noise of their feet.

The wind has the sound of a laugh in the clamor of days and of deeds:
The priests are scattered like chaff, and the rulers broken like reeds.

The high-priest sick from qualms, with his raiment bloodily dashed;
The thief with branded palms, and the liar with cheeks abashed.

They are smitten, they tremble greatly, they are pained for their pleasant things:
For the house of the priests made stately, and the might in the mouth of the kings.

They are grieved and greatly afraid; they are taken, they shall not flee:
For the heart of the nations is made as the strength of the springs of the sea.

They were fair in the grace of gold, they walked
with delicate feet ;
They were clothed with the cunning of old, and the
smell of their garments was sweet.

For the breaking of gold in their hair they halt as a
man made lame :
They are utterly naked and bare ; their mouths are
bitter with shame.

Wilt thou judge thy people now, O king that wast
found most wise ?
Wilt thou lie any more, O thou whose mouth is emp-
tied of lies ?

Shall God make a pact with thee, till his hook be
found in thy sides ?
Wilt thou put back the time of the sea, or the place
of the season of tides ?

Set a word in thy lips, to stand before God with a
word in thy mouth :
That "the rain shall return in the land, and the
tender dew after drouth."

But the arm of the elders is broken, their streng this
unbound and undone :
They wait for a sign of a token ; they cry, and there
cometh none.

Their moan is in every place, the cry of them filleth
the land :
There is shame in the sight of their face, there is
fear in the thews of their hand.

They are girdled about the reins with a curse for the
girdle thereon :
For the noise of the rending of chains, the face of
their color is gone.

For the sound of the shouting of men, they are
grievously stricken at heart :
They are smitten asunder with pain, their bones are
smitten apart.

There is none of them all that is whole;
their lips gape open for breath:
They are clothed with sickness of soul, and the shape
of the shadow of death.

The wind is thwart in their feet; it is full of the
shouting of mirth;
As one shaketh the sides of a sheet, so it shaketh the
ends of the earth.

The sword, the sword is made keen; the iron has
opened its mouth;
The corn is red that was green; it is bound for the
sheaves of the south.

The sound of a word was shed, the sound of the
wind as a breath,
In the ears of the souls that were dead, in the dust
of the deepness of death;

Where the face of the moon is taken, the ways of the
stars undone,
The light of the whole sky shaken, the light of the
face of the sun;

Where the waters are emptied and broken, the waves
of the waters are stayed;
Where God has bound for a token the darkness that
maketh afraid;

Where the sword was covered and hidden, and dust
had grown in its side,
A word came forth that was bidden, the crying of
one that cried:

The sides of the two-edged sword shall be bare, and
its mouth shall be red,
For the breath of the face of the Lord that is felt in
the bones of the dead.

TO VICTOR HUGO.

In the fair days when god
By man as godlike trod,
And each alike was Greek, alike was free,
God's lightning spared, they said,
Alone the happier head
Whose laurels screened it ; fruitless grace for thee
To whom the high gods gave of right
Their thunders and their laurels and their light.

Sunbeams and bays before
Our master's servants wore,
For these Apollo left in all men's lands ;
But far from these ere now,
And watched with jealous brow,
Lay the blind lightnings shut between God's hands,
And only loosed on slaves and kings
The terror of the tempest of their wings.

Born in these younger years
That shone with storms of spears,
And shook in the wind blown from a dead world's pyre,
When by her back-blown hair
Napoleon caught the fair
And fierce Republic with her feet of fire,
And stayed with iron words and hands
Her flight, and freedom in a thousand lands :

Thou sawest the tides of things
Close over heads of kings,
And thine hand felt the thunder, and to thee
Laurels and lightnings were
As sunbeams and soft air
Mixed each in other, or as mist with sea
Mixed, or as memory with desire,
Or the lute's pulses with the louder lyre.

For thee man's spirit stood
Disrobed of flesh and blood,

And bare the heart of the most secret hours;
  And to thine hand more tame
  Than birds in winter came
High hopes and unknown flying forms of powers,
  And from thy table fed, and sang
Till with the tune men's ears took fire and rang.

  Even all men's eyes and ears
  With fiery sound and tears
Waxed hot, and cheeks caught flame and eyelids light,
  At those high songs of thine
  That stung the sense like wine,
Or fell more soft than dew or snow by night,
  Or wailed as in some flooded cave
Sobs the strong broken spirit of a wave.

  But we, our master, we
  Whose hearts, uplift to thee,
Ache with the pulse of thy remembered song,—
  We ask not nor await
  From the clinched hands of fate,
As thou remission of the world's old wrong;
  Respite we ask not, no release:
Freedom a man may have, he shall not peace.

  Though thy most fiery hope
  Storm heaven, to set wide ope
The all-sought-for gate whence God or chance debars
  All feet of men, all eyes—
  The old night resumes her skies,
Her hollow hiding-place of clouds and stars,
  Where naught save these is sure in sight,
And, paven with death, our days are roofed with night.

  One thing we can: to be
  Awhile, as men may, free;
But not by hope or pleasure the most stern
  Goddess, most awful-eyed,
  Sits, but on either side
Sits sorrow and the wrath of hearts that burn,
  Sad faith that cannot hope or fear,
And memory gray with many a flowerless year.

Not that in stranger's wise
I lift not loving eyes
To the fair foster-mother France, that gave
Beyond the pale fleet foam
Help to my sires and home;
Whose great sweet breast could shelter those and save
Whom from her nursing breasts and hands
Their land cast forth of old on gentler lands.

Not without thoughts that ache
For theirs and for thy sake,
I, born of exiles, hail thy banished head;
I, whose young song took flight
Toward the great heat and light
On me a child from thy far splendor shed,
From thine high place of soul and song,
Which, fallen on eyes yet feeble, made them strong.

Ah! not with lessening love
For memories born hereof,
I look to that sweet mother-land, and see
The old fields and fair full streams,
And skies, but fled like dreams
The feet of freedom and the thought of thee;
And all between the skies and graves
The mirth of mockers and the shame of slaves.

She, killed with noisome air,
Even she! and still so fair,
Who said, "Let there be freedom," and there was
Freedom; and as a lance
The fiery eyes of France
Touched the world's sleep, and as a sleep made pass
Forth of men's heavier ears and eyes
Smitten with fire and thunder from new skies.

Are they men's friends indeed
Who watch them weep and bleed?
Because thou hast loved us, shall the gods love thee?
Thou, first of men and friend,
Seest thou, even thou, the end?
Thou knowest what hath been, knowest thou what
shall be?
Evils may pass and hopes endure;
But fate is dim, and all the gods obscure.

O nursed in airs apart,
O poet highest of heart,
Hast thou seen time, who hast seen so many things ?
Are not the years more wise,
More sad than keenest eyes,
The years with soundless feet and sounding wings ?
Passing we hear them not, but past
The clamor of them thrills us, and their blast.

Thou art chief of us, and lord ;
Thy song is as a sword
Keen-edged and scented in the blade from flowers ;
Thou art lord and king ; but we
Lift younger eyes, and see
Less of high hope, less light on wandering hours ;
Hours that have borne men down so long,
Seen the right fail, and watched uplift the wrong.

But thine imperial soul,
As years and ruins roll
To the same end, and all things and all dreams
With the same wreck and roar
Drift on the dim same shore,
Still in the bitter foam and brackish streams
Tracks the fresh water-spring to be,
And sudden sweeter fountains in the sea.

As once the high god bound
With many a rivet round
Man's savior, and with iron nailed him through,
At the wild end of things,
Where even his own bird's wings
Flagged, whence the sea shone like a drop of dew,
From Caucasus beheld below
Past fathoms of unfathomable snow ;

So the strong God, the chance
Central of circumstance,
Still shows him exile who will not be slave ;
All thy great fame and thee
Girt by the dim strait sea
With multitudinous walls of wandering wave ;
Shows us our greatest from his throne
Fate-stricken, and rejected of his own.

Yea, he is strong, thou say'st,
A mystery many-faced,
The wild beasts know him, and the wild birds flee;
The blind night sees him, death
Shrinks beaten at his breath,
And his right hand is heavy on the sea:
We know he hath made us, and is king;
We know not if he care for any thing.

Thus much, no more, we know:
He bade what is, be so,
Bade light be, and bade night be, one by one;
Bade hope and fear, bade ill
And good redeem and kill,
Till all men be aweary of the sun,
And this world burn in its own flame,
And bear no witness longer of his name.

Yet though all this be thus,
Be those men praised of us
Who have loved and wrought and sorrowed, and not sinned
For fame or fear or gold,
Nor waxed for winter cold,
Nor changed for changes of the worldly wind;
Praised above men of men be these,
Till this one world and work we know shall cease.

Yea, one thing more than this,
We know that one thing is,
The splendor of a spirit without blame,
That not the laboring years
Blind-born, nor any fears,
Nor men nor any gods can tire or tame;
But purer power with fiery breath
Fills and exalts above the gulfs of death.

Praised above men be thou,
Whose laurel-laden brow,
Made for the morning, droops not in the night;
Praised and beloved, that none
Of all thy great things done
Flies higher than thy most equal spirit's flight;
Praised, that nor doubt nor hope could bend
Earth's loftiest head, found upright to the end.

BEFORE DAWN.

SWEET life, if life were stronger,
Earth clear of years that wrong her,
Then two things might live longer,
  Two sweeter things than they,—
Delight, the rootless flower,
And love, the bloomless bower;
Delight that lives an hour,
  And love that lives a day.

From evensong to daytime,
When April melts in Maytime,
Love lengthens out his playtime,
  Love lessens breath by breath,
And kiss by kiss grows older
On listless throat or shoulder
Turned sideways now, turned colder
  Than life that dreams of death.

This one thing once worth giving
Life gave, and seemed worth living;
Sin sweet beyond forgiving
  And brief beyond regret:
To laugh and love together,
And weave with foam and feather
And wind and words the tether
  Our memories play with yet.

Ah! one thing worth beginning,
One thread in life worth spinning,
Ah, sweet, one sin worth sinning
  With all the whole soul's will;
To lull you till one stilled you,
To kiss you till one killed you,
To feed you till one filled you,
  Sweet lips, if love could fill;

To hunt sweet Love, and lose him
Between white arms and bosom,
Between the bud and blossom,
  Between your throat and chin;

To say of shame—what is it?
Of virtue—we can miss it;
Of sin—we can but kiss it,
And it's no longer sin;

To feel the strong soul, stricken
Through fleshly pulses, quicken
Beneath swift sighs that thicken,
Soft hands and lips that smite;
Lips that no love can tire,
With hands that sting like fire,
Weaving the web Desire
To snare the bird Delight.

But love so lightly plighted,
Our love with torch unlighted,
Paused near us unaffrighted,
Who found and left him free:
None, seeing us cloven in sunder,
Will weep or laugh or wonder;
Light love stands clear of thunder,
And safe from winds at sea.

As, when late larks give warning
Of dying lights and dawning,
Night murmurs to the morning,
"Lie still, O love, lie still;"
And half her dark limbs cover
The white limbs of her lover,
With amorous plumes that hover
And fervent lips that chill;

As scornful day represses
Night's void and vain caresses,
And from her cloudier tresses
Unwinds the gold of his,
With limbs from limbs dividing,
And breath by breath subsiding;
For love has no abiding,
But dies before the kiss:

So hath it been, so be it ;
For who shall live and flee it ?
But look that no man see it
  Or hear it unaware ;
Lest all who love and choose him
See Love, and so refuse him ;
For all who find him lose him,
  But all have found him fair.

THE GARDEN OF PROSERPINE.

Here, where the world is quiet,
  Here, where all trouble seems
Dead winds' and spent waves' riot
  In doubtful dreams of dreams ;
I watch the green field growing
For reaping folk and sowing,
For harvest time and mowing,
  A sleepy world of streams.

I am tired of tears and laughter,
  And men that laugh and weep,
Of what may come hereafter
  For men that sow to reap :
I am weary of days and hours,
Blown buds of barren flowers,
Desires and dreams and powers,
  And every thing but sleep.

Here life has death for neighbor,
  And far from eye or ear
Wan waves and wet winds labor,
  Weak ships and spirits steer ;
They drive adrift, and whither
They wot not who make thither ;
But no such winds blow hither,
  And no such things grow here.

No growth of moor or coppice,
  No heather-flower or vine,
But bloomless buds of poppies,
  Green grapes of Proserpine,

Pale beds of blowing rushes
Where no leaf blooms or blushes
Save this whereout she crushes
For dead men deadly wine.

Pale, without name or number,
In fruitless fields of corn,
They bow themselves and slumber
All night till light is born;
And like a soul belated,
In hell and heaven unmated,
By cloud and mist abated
Comes out of darkness morn.

Though one were strong as seven,
He too with death shall dwell,
Nor wake with wings in heaven,
Nor weep for pains in hell;
Though one were fair as roses,
His beauty clouds and closes;
And well though love reposes,
In the end it is not well.

Pale, beyond porch and portal
Crowned with calm leaves, she stands
Who gathers all things mortal
With cold immortal hands;
Her languid lips are sweeter
Than love's who fears to greet her
To men that mix and meet her
For many times and lands.

She waits for each and other,
She waits for all men born;
Forgets the earth her mother,
The life of fruits and corn;
And spring and seed and swallow
Take wing for her, and follow
Where summer song rings hollow,
And flowers are put to scorn.

There go the loves that wither,
The old loves with wearier wings;
And all dead years draw thither,
And all disastrous things;

Dead dreams of days forsaken,
Blind buds that snows have shaken,
Wild leaves that winds have taken,
Red strays of ruined springs.

We are not sure of sorrow,
And joy was never sure;
To-day will die to-morrow;
Time stoops to no man's lure;
And love, grown faint and fretful,
With lips but half regretful
Sighs, and with eyes forgetful
Weeps that no loves endure.

From too much love of living,
From hope and fear set free,
We thank with brief thanksgiving
Whatever gods may be
That no life lives forever;
That dead men rise up never;
That even the weariest river
Winds somewhere safe to sea.

Then star nor sun shall waken,
Nor any change of light;
Nor sound of waters shaken,
Nor any sound or sight;
Nor wintry leaves nor vernal,
Nor days nor things diurnal:
Only the sleep eternal
In an eternal night.

LOVE AT SEA.

We are in love's land to-day:
Where shall we go?
Love, shall we start or stay,
Or sail or row?
There's many a wind and way,
And never a May but May:
We are in love's hand to-day;
Where shall we go?

Our land-wind is the breath
Of sorrows kissed to death,
  And joys that were;
Our ballast is a rose;
Our way lies where God knows,
  And love knows where.
    We are in love's hand to-day—

Our seamen are fledged Loves,
Our masts are bills of doves,
  Our decks fine gold;
Our ropes are dead maids' hair,
Our stores are love-shafts fair
  And manifold.
    We are in love's land to-day—

Where shall we land you, sweet?
On fields of strange men's feet,
  Or fields near home?
Or where the fire-flowers blow,
Or where the flowers of snow,
  Or flowers of foam?
    We are in love's hand to-day—

Land me, she says, where love
Shows but one shaft, one dove,
  One heart, one hand.
—A shore like that, my dear,
Lies where no man will steer,
  No maiden land.
Imitated from Théophile Gautier.

APRIL.

FROM THE FRENCH OF THE VIDAME DE CHARTRES. 12—?

When the fields catch flower,
  And the underwood is green,
And from bower unto bower
  The songs of the birds begin,
  I sing with sighing between.

When I laugh and sing,
I am heavy at heart for my sin;
I am sad in the spring
For my love that I shall not win,
For a foolish thing.

This profit I have of my woe,
That I know, as I sing,
I know he will needs have it so
Who is master and king,
Who is lord of the spirit of spring.
I will serve her, and will not spare
Till her pity awake
Who is good, who is pure, who is fair,
Even her for whose sake
Love hath ta'en me and slain unaware.

O my lord, O Love,
I have laid my life at thy feet;
Have thy will thereof,
Do as it please thee with it,
For what shall please thee is sweet.
I am come unto thee
To do thee service, O Love!
Yet cannot I see
Thou wilt take any pity thereof,
Any mercy on me.

But the grace I have long time sought
Comes never in sight,
If in her it abideth not,
Through thy mercy and might,
Whose heart is the world's delight.
Thou hast sworn without fail I shall die,
For my heart is set
On what hurts me, I wot not why,
But cannot forget
What I love, what I sing for and sigh.

She is worthy of praise;
For this grief of her giving is worth
All the joy of my days
That lie between death's day and birth,
All the lordship of things upon earth.

Nay, what have I said ?
I would not be glad if I could :
My dream and my dread
Are of her, and for her sake I would
That my life were fled.

Lo, sweet, if I durst not pray to you,
Then were I dead ;
If I sang not a little to say to you,
(Could it be said)
O my love, how my heart would be fed ;
Ah, sweet who hast hold of my heart,
For thy love's sake I live ;
Do but tell me, ere either depart,
What a lover may give
For a woman so fair as thou art.

The lovers that disbelieve,
False rumors shall grieve
And evil-speaking shall part.

BEFORE PARTING.

A MONTH or twain to live on honeycomb
Is pleasant ; but one tires of scented time,
Cold sweet recurrence of accepted rhyme,
And that strong purple under juice and foam
Where the wine's heart has burst ;
Nor feel the latter kisses like the first.

Once yet, this poor one time : I will not pray
Even to change the bitterness of it,
The bitter taste ensuing on the sweet,
To make your tears fall where your soft hair lay
All blurred and heavy in some perfumed wise
Over my face and eyes.

And yet who knows what end the scythèd wheat
Makes of its foolish poppies' mouths of red ?
These were not sown, these are not harvested,
They grow a month, and are cast under feet,
And none has care thereof,
As none has care of a divided love.

I know each shadow of your lips by rote,
Each change of love in eyelids and eyebrows;
The fashion of fair temples tremulous
With tender blood, and color of your throat;
I know not how love is gone out of this,
Seeing that all was his.

Love's likeness there endures upon all these;
But out of these one shall not gather love.
Day hath not strength nor the night shade enough
To make love whole, and fill his lips with ease,
As some bee-builded cell
Feels at filled lips the heavy honey swell.

I know not how this last month leaves your hair
Less full of purple color and hid spice,
And that luxurious trouble of closed eyes
Is mixed with meaner shadow and waste care;
And love, kissed out by pleasure, seems not yet
Worth patience to regret.

THE SUNDEW.

A LITTLE marsh-plant, yellow green,
And pricked at lip with tender red.
Tread close, and either way you tread
Some faint black water jets between
Lest you should bruise the curious head

A live thing may be; who shall know?
The summer knows and suffers it;
For the cool moss is thick and sweet
Each side, and saves the blossom so
That it lives out the long June heat.

The deep scent of the heather burns
About it: breathless though it be,
Bow down and worship; more than we
Is the least flower whose life returns,
Least weed renascent in the sea.

We are vexed and cumbered in earth's sight
With wants, with many memories :
These see their mother what she is,
Glad-growing, till August leave more bright
The apple-colored cranberries.

Wind blows and bleaches the strong grass,
Blown all one way to shelter it
From trample of strayed kine, with feet
Felt heavier than the moorhen was,
Strayed up past patches of wild wheat.

You call it sundew : how it grows,
If with its color it have breath,
If life taste sweet to it, if death
Pain its soft petal, no man knows :
Man has no sight or sense that saith.

My sundew, grown of gentle days,
In these green miles the spring begun
Thy growth ere April had half done
With the soft secret of her ways,
Or June made ready for the sun.

O red-lipped mouth of marsh-flower !
I have a secret halved with thee.
The name that is love's name to me
Thou knowest, and the face of her
Who is my festival to see.

The hard sun, as thy petals knew,
Colored the heavy moss-water :
Thou wert not worth green midsummer,
Nor fit to live to August blue,
O sundew, not remembering her.

AN INTERLUDE.

In the greenest growth of the Maytime,
I rode where the woods were wet,
Between the dawn and the daytime :
The spring was glad that we met.

There was something the season wanted,
Though the ways and the woods smelt sweet,—
The breath at your lips that panted,
The pulse of the grass at your feet.

You came, and the sun came after,
And the green grew golden above;
And the flag-flowers lighten with laughter,
And the meadow-sweet shook with love.

Your feet in the full-grown grasses
Moved soft as a weak wind blows:
You passed me as April passes,
With face made out of a rose.

By the stream where the stems were slender,
Your bright foot paused at the sedge:
It might be to watch the tender
Light leaves in the springtime hedge,

On boughs that the sweet month blanches
With flowery frost of May;
It might be a bird in the branches;
It might be a thorn in the way.

I waited to watch you linger
With foot drawn back from the dew,
Till a sunbeam straight like a finger
Struck sharp through the leaves at you.

And a bird overhead sang *Follow*,
And a bird to the right sang *Here*;
And the arch of the leaves was hollow,
And the meaning of May was clear.

I saw where the sun's hand pointed,
I knew what the bird's note said:
By the dawn and the dewfall anointed,
You were queen by the gold on your head.

As the glimpse of a burnt-out ember
Recalls a regret of the sun,
I remember, forget, and remember
What Love saw done and undone.

I remember the way we parted,
The day and the way we met:
You hoped we were both broken-hearted,
And knew we should both forget.

And May with her world in flower
Seemed still to murmur and smile
As you murmured and smiled for an hour:
I saw you turn at the stile.

A hand like a white wood-blossom
You lifted, and waved, and passed,
With head hung down to the bosom,
And pale, as it seemed, at last.

And the best and the worst of this is,
That neither is most to blame,
If you've forgotten my kisses,
And I've forgotten your name.

HENDECASYLLABICS.

In the month of the long decline of roses,
I, beholding the summer dead before me,
Set my face to the sea, and journeyed silent,
Gazing eagerly where above the sea mark
Flame as fierce as the fervid eyes of lions
Half divided the eyelids of the sunset;
Till I heard as it were a noise of waters
Moving tremulous under feet of angels
Multitudinous, out of all the heavens;
Knew the fluttering wind, the fluttered foliage,
Shaken fitfully, full of sound and shadow;
And saw, trodden upon by noiseless angels,
Long mysterious reaches fed with moonlight,
Sweet sad straits in a soft subsiding channel,
Blown about by the lips of winds I knew not,
Winds not born in the north nor any quarter,
Winds, not warm with the south nor any sunshine;
Heard between them a voice of exultation,

"Lo, the summer is dead, the sun is faded,
Even like as a leaf the year is withered,
All the fruits of the day from all her branches
Gathered, neither is any left to gather.
All the flowers are dead, the tender blossoms,
All are taken away; the season wasted,
Like an ember among the fallen ashes.
Now with light of the winter days, with moonlight,
Light of snow, and the bitter light of hoar-frost,
We bring flowers that fade not after autumn,
Pale white chaplets and crowns of latter seasons,
Fair false leaves (but the summer leaves were falser),
Woven under the eyes of stars and planets
When low light was upon the windy reaches
Where the flower of foam was blown, a lily
Dropt among the sonorous fruitless furrows
And green fields of the sea that make no pasture:
Since the winter begins, the weeping winter,
All whose flowers are tears, and round his temples
Iron blossom of frost is bound forever."

SAPPHICS.

ALL the night sleep came not upon my eyelids,
Shed not dew, nor shook nor unclosed a feather,
Yet with lips shut close and with eyes of iron
Stood and beheld me.

Then to me so lying awake a vision
Came without sleep over the seas and touched me,
Softly touched mine eyelids and lips; and I too,
Full of the vision,

Saw the white implacable Aphrodite,
Saw the hair unbound and the feet unsandalled
Shine as fire of sunset on western waters;
Saw the reluctant

Feet, the straining plumes of the doves that drew her,
Looking, always, looking with neck reverted;
Back to Lesbos, back to the hills where under
Shone Mitylene;

Heard the flying feet of the Loves behind her
Make a sudden thunder upon the waters,
As the thunder flung from the strong unclosing
Wings of a great wind.

So the goddess fled from her place, with awful
Sound of feet and thunder of wings around her;
While behind a clamor of singing women
Severed the twilight.

Ah the singing, ah the delight, the passion!
All the Loves wept, listening; sick with anguish,
Stood the crowned nine Muses about Apollo;
Fear was upon them,

While the tenth sang wonderful things they knew not.
Ah the tenth, the Lesbian! the nine were silent,
None endured the sound of her song for weeping;
Laurel by laurel,

Faded all their crowns; but about her forehead,
Round her woven tresses and ashen temples
White as dead snow, paler than grass in summer,
Ravaged with kisses,

Shone a light of fire as a crown forever.
Yea, almost the implacable Aphrodite
Paused, and almost wept; such a song was that song,
Yea, by her name too

Called her, saying, "Turn to me, O my Sappho!"
Yet she turned her face from the Love's, she saw not
Tears for laughter darken immortal eyelids,
Heard not about her

Fearful fitful wings of the doves departing,
Saw not how the bosom of Aphrodite
Shook with weeping, saw not her shaken raiment,
Saw not her hands wrung;

Saw the Lesbians kissing across their smitten
Lutes with lips more sweet than the sound of lute-
strings,
Mouth to mouth and hand upon hand her chosen,
Fairer than all men;

Only saw the beautiful lips and fingers,
Full of songs and kisses and little whispers,
Full of music; only beheld among them
Soar, as a bird soars

Newly fledged, her visible song, a marvel,
Made of perfect sound and exceeding passion,
Sweetly shapen, terrible, full of thunders,
Clothed with the wind's wings.

Then rejoiced she, laughing with love, and scattered
Roses, awful roses of holy blossom;
Then the Loves thronged sadly with hidden faces
Round Aphrodite,

Then the Muses, stricken at heart, were silent;
Yea, the gods waxed pale; such a song was that
song.
All reluctant, all with a fresh repulsion,
Fled from before her.

All withdrew long since, and the land was barren,
Full of fruitless women and music only.
Now perchance, when winds are assuaged at sunset,
Lulled at the dewfall,

By the gray sea-side, unassuaged, unheard of,
Unbeloved, unseen in the ebb of twilight,
Ghosts of outcast women return lamenting,
Purged not in Lethe,

Clothed about with flame and with tears, and sing-
ing
Songs that move the heart of the shaken heaven,
Songs that break the heart of the earth with pity,
Hearing, to hear them.

AT ELEUSIS.

Men of Eleusis, ye that with long staves
Sit in the market-houses, and speak words
Made sweet with wisdom as the rare wine is
Thickened with honey; and ye sons of these
Who in the glad thick streets go up and down
For pastime or grave traffic or mere chance;
And all fair women having rings of gold
On hands or hair; and chiefest over these
I name you, daughters of this man the king,
Who dipping deep smooth pitchers of pure brass
Under the bubbled wells, till each round lip
Stooped with loose gurgle of waters incoming,
Found me an old sick woman, lamed and lean,
Beside a growth of builded olive-boughs
Whence multiplied thick song of thick-plumed
throats—
Also wet tears filled up my hollow hands
By reason of my crying into them—
And pitied me; for as cold water ran
And washed the pitchers full from lip to lip,
So washed both eyes full the strong salt of tears.
And ye put water to my mouth, made sweet
With brown hill-berries: so in time I spoke,
And gathered my loose knees from under me.
Moreover, in the broad, fair halls this month
Have I found space and bountiful abode
To please me. I Demeter speak of this,
Who am the mother and the mate of things:
For as ill men by drugs or singing words
Shut the doors inward of the narrow womb
Like a lock bolted with round iron through,
Thus I shut up the body and sweet mouth
Of all soft pasture and the tender land,
So that no seed can enter in by it,
Though one sow thickly, nor some grain get out
Past the hard clods men cleave and bite with steel
To widen the sealed lips of them for use.
None of you is there in the peopled street

But knows how all the dry-drawn furrows ache
With no green spot made count of in the black;
How the wind finds no comfortable grass,
Nor is assuaged with bud nor breath of herbs;
And in hot autumn, when ye house the stacks,
All fields are helpless in the sun, all trees
Stand as a man stripped out of all but skin.
Nevertheless, ye sick have help to get
By means and stablished ordinance of God;
For God is wiser than a good man is.
But never shall new grass be sweet in earth
Till I get righted of my wound and wrong
By changing counsel of ill-minded Zeus.
For of all other gods is none save me
Clothed with like power to build and break the year.
I make the lesser green begin, when spring
Touches not earth but with one fearful foot;
And as a careful gilder with grave art
Soberly colors and completes the face,
Mouth, chin, and all, of some sweet work in stone,
I carve the shapes of grass and tender corn,
And color the ripe edges and long spikes
With the red increase and the grace of gold.
No tradesman in soft wools is cunninger
To kill the secret of the fat white fleece
With stains of blue and purple wrought in it.
Three moons were made, and three moons burnt away,
While I held journey hither out of Crete,
Comfortless, tended by grave Hecate,
Whom my wound stung with double iron point;
For all my face was like a cloth wrung out
With close and weeping wrinkles, and both lids
Sodden with salt continuance of tears.
For Hades and the sidelong will of Zeus,
And that lame wisdom that has writhen feet,
Cunning, begotten in the bed of Shame,
These three took evil will at me, and made
Such counsel, that when time got wing to fly
This Hades out of summer and low fields
Forced the bright body of Persephone:
Out of pure grass, where she lying down, red flowers

Made their sharp little shadows on her sides,
Pale heat, pale color on pale maiden flesh,—
And chill water slid over her reddening feet,
Killing the throbs in their soft blood ; and birds,
Perched next her elbows, and pecking at her hair,
Stretched their necks more to see her than even to sing.
A sharp thing is it I have need to say ;
For Hades holding both white wrists of hers
Unloosed the girdle, and with knot by knot
Bound her between his wheels upon the seat,
Bound her pure body, holiest yet and dear
To me and God as always, clothed about
With blossoms loosened, as her knees went down,
Let fall as she let go of this and this
By tens and twenties tumbled to her feet,
White waifs or purple of the pasturage.
Therefore with only going up and down
My feet were wasted, and the gracious air,
To me discomfortable and dun, became
As weak smoke blowing in the underworld.
And finding in the process of ill days
What part had Zeus herein, and how as mate
He coped with Hades, yokefellow in sin,
I set my lips against the meat of gods,
And drank not, neither ate or slept, in heaven.
Nor in the golden greeting of their mouths
Did ear take note of me, nor eye at all
Track my feet going in the ways of them.
Like a great fire on some strait slip of land
Between two washing inlets of wet sea
That burns the grass up to each lip of beach,
And strengthens, waxing in the growth of wind,
So burnt my soul in me at heaven and earth,
Each way a ruin and a hungry plague,
Visible evil ; nor could any night
Put cool between mine eyelids, nor the sun
With competence of gold fill out my want.
Yea, so my flame burnt up the grass and stones,
Shone to the salt-white edges of thin sea,
Distempered all the gracious work, and made
Sick change, unseasonable increase of days
And scant avail of seasons ; for by this

The fair gods faint in hollow heaven : there comes
No taste of burnings of the twofold fat
To leave their palates smooth, nor in their lips
Soft rings of smoke, and weak scent wandering ;
All cattle waste and rot, and their ill smell
Grows alway from the lank, unsavory flesh
That no man slays for offering ; the sea
And waters moved beneath the heath and corn
Preserve the people of fin-twinkling fish,
And river-flies feed thick upon the smooth ;
But all earth over is no man or bird
(Except the sweet race of the kingfisher)
That lacks not, and is wearied with much loss.
Meantime, the purple inward of the house
Was softened with all grace of scent and sound
In ear and nostril perfecting my praise ;
Faint grape-flowers and cloven honey-cake
And the just grain with dues of the shed salt
Made me content : yet my hand loosened not
Its gripe upon your harvest all year long.
While I, thus woman-muffled in wan flesh
And waste externals of a perished face,
Preserved the levels of my wrath and love
Patiently ruled ; and with soft offices
Cooled the sharp noons, and busied the warm nights
In care of this my choice, this child my choice,
Triptolemus, the king's selected son :
That this fair yearlong body, which hath grown
Strong with strange milk upon the mortal lip
And nerved with half a god, might so increase
Outside the bulk and the bare scope of man ;
And waxen over large to hold within
Base breath of yours, and this impoverished air,
I might exalt him past the flame of stars,
The limit and walled reach of the great world.
Therefore my breast made common to his mouth
Immortal savors, and the taste whereat
Twice their hard life strains out the colored veins,
And twice its brain confirms the narrow shell.
Also at night, unwinding cloth from cloth
As who unhusks an almond to the white,
And pastures curiously the purer taste,

I bared the gracious limbs and the soft feet,
Unswaddled the weak hands, and in mid-ash
Laid the sweet flesh of either feeble side,
More tender for impressure of some touch
Than wax to any pen ; and lit around
Fire, and made crawl the white, worm-shapen flame,
And leap in little angers spark by spark
At head at once, and feet ; and the faint hair
Hissed with rare sprinkles in the closer curl,
And like scaled oarage of a keen thin fish
In sea-water, so in pure fire his feet
Struck out, and the flame bit not in his flesh,
But like a kiss it curled his lip, and heat
Fluttered his eyelids ; so each night I blew
The hot ash red to purge him to full god.
Ill is it when fear hungers in the soul
For painful food, and chokes thereon, being fed ;
And ill slant eyes interpret the straight sun,
But in their scope its white is wried to black :
By the queen Metaneira mean I this ;
For with sick wrath upon her lips and heart,
Narrowing with fear the spleenful passages,
She thought to thread this web's fine ravel out,
Nor leave her shuttle split in combing it ;
Therefore she stole on us, and with hard sight
Peered, and stooped close ; then with pale, open
mouth
As the fire smote her in the eyes between
Cried, and the child's laugh sharply shortening
As fire doth under rain, fell off ; the flame
Writhed once all through and died, and in thick dark
Tears fell from mine on the child's weeping eyes,
Eyes dispossessed of strong inheritance
And mortal fallen anew. Who not the less
From bud of beard to pale-gray flower of hair
Shall wax vine-wise to a lordly vine, whose grapes
Bleed the red, heavy blood of swoln soft wine,
Subtle with sharp leaves' intricacy, until
Full of white years and blossom of hoary days
I take him perfected ; for whose one sake
I am thus gracious to the least who stands
Filleted with white wool and girt upon
As he whose prayer endures upon the lip

And falls not waste : wherefore let sacrifice
Burn and run red in all the wider ways
Seeing I have sworn by the pale temples' band
And poppied hair of gold Persephone
Sad-tressed and pleached low down about her brows,
And by the sorrow in her lips, and death
Her dumb and mournful-mouthed minister,
My word for you is eased of its harsh weight
And doubled with soft promise ; and your king
Triptolemus, this Celeus dead and swathed
Purple and pale for golden burial,
Shall be your helper in my services,
Dividing earth and reaping fruits thereof
In fields where wait, well-girt, well-wreathen, all
The heavy-handed seasons all year through ;
Saving the choice of warm spear-headed grain,
And stooping sharp to the slant-sided share
All beasts that furrow the remeasured land
With their bowed necks of burden equable.

AUGUST.

THERE were four apples on the bough,
Half gold, half red, that one might know
The blood was ripe inside the core ;
The color of the leaves was more
Like stems of yellow corn that grow
Through all the gold June meadow's floor.

The warm smell of the fruit was good
To feed on, and the split green wood,
With all its bearded lips and stains
Of mosses in the cloven veins,
Most pleasant, if one lay or stood
In sunshine or in happy rains.
There were four apples on the tree,
Red stained through gold, that all might see
The sun went warm from core to rind ;
The green leaves made the summer blind
In that soft place they kept for me
With golden apples shut behind.

The leaves caught gold across the sun,
And where the bluest air begun,
Thirsted for song to help the heat ;
As I to feel my lady's feet
Draw close before the day were done :
Both lips grew dry with dreams of it.

In the mute August afternoon
They trembled to some undertune
Of music in the silver air :
Great pleasure was it to be there
Till green turned duskier, and the moon
Colored the corn-sheaves like gold hair.

That August time it was delight
To watch the red moons wane to white
'Twixt gray seamed stems of apple-trees :
A sense of heavy harmonies
Grew on the growth of patient night,
More sweet than shapen music is.

But some three hours before the moon
The air, still eager from the noon,
Flagged after heat, not wholly dead ;
Against the stem I leant my head ;
The color soothed me like a tune,
Green leaves all round the gold and red.

I lay there till the warm smell grew
More sharp, when flecks of yellow dew
Between the round ripe leaves had blurred
The rind with stain and wet : I heard
A wind that blew and breathed and blew,
Too weak to alter its one word.

The wet leaves next the gentle fruit
Felt smoother, and the brown tree-root
Felt the mould warmer : I, too, felt
(As water feels the slow gold melt
Right through it when the day burns mute)
The peace of time wherein love dwelt.

There were four apples on the tree,
Gold stained on red, that all might see
The sweet blood filled them to the core :
The color of her hair is more
Like stems of fair faint gold, that be
Mown from the harvest's middle-floor.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL.[1]

THREE damsels in the queen's chamber,
The queen's mouth was most fair :
She spake a word of God's mother
As the combs went in her hair.
Mary that is of might,
Bring us to thy Son's sight.

They held the gold combs out from her,
A span's length off her head :
She sang this song of God's mother
And of her bearing-bed.
Mary most full of grace,
Bring us to thy Son's face.

When she sat at Joseph's hand,
She looked against her side ;
And either way from the short silk band
Her girdle was all wried.
Mary that all good may,
Bring us to thy Son's way.

Mary had three women for her bed :
The twain were maidens clean ;
The first of them had white and red,
The third had riven green.
Mary that is so sweet,
Bring us to thy Son's feet.

She had three women for her hair :
Two were gloved soft and shod ;

[1] Suggested by a drawing of Mr. D. G Rossetti's.

The third had feet and fingers bare,
She was the likest God.
Mary that wieldeth land,
Bring us to thy Son's hand.

She had three women for her ease:
The twain were good women;
The first two were the two Maries,
The third was Magdalen.
Mary that perfect is,
Bring us to thy Son's kiss.

Joseph had three workmen in his stall,
To serve him well upon:
The first of them were Peter and Paul,
The third of them was John.
Mary, God's handmaiden,
Bring us to thy Son's ken.

"If your child be none other man's,
But if it be very mine,
The bedstead shall be gold two spans,
The bedfoot silver fine."
Mary that made God mirth,
Bring us to thy Son's birth.

"If the child be some other man's,
And if it be none of mine,
The manger shall be straw two spans,
Betwixen kine and kine."
Mary that made sin cease,
Bring us to thy Son's peace.

Christ was born upon this wise:
It fell on such a night,
Neither with sounds of psalteries,
Nor with fire for light.
Mary that is God's spouse,
Bring us to thy Son's house.

The star came out upon the east
With a great sound and sweet:
Kings gave gold to make him feast,
And myrrh for him to eat.
Mary, of thy sweet mood,
Bring us to thy Son's good.

He had two handmaids at his head,
One handmaid at his feet:
The twain of them were fair and red,
The third one was right sweet.
Mary that is most wise,
Bring us to thy Son's eyes. Amen.

THE MASQUE OF QUEEN BERSABE.

A MIRACLE-PLAY.

King David. Knghts mine, all that be in hall,
I have a council to you all,
Because of this thing God lets fall
Among us for a sign.
For some days hence as I did eat
From kingly dishes my good meat,
There flew a bird between my feet
As red as any wine.
This bird had a long bill of red,
And a gold ring above his head;
Long time he sat and nothing said,
Put softly down his neck, and fed
From the gilt patens fine:
And as I marvelled at the last,
He shut his two keen eyën fast,
And suddenly woxe big and brast
Ere one should tell to mine.

Primus Miles. Sir, note this that I will say:
That Lord who maketh corn with hay,
And morrows each of yesterday,
He hath you in his hand.

Secundus Miles (*Paganus quidam*). By Satan I
hold no such thing;
For if wine swell within a king
Whose ears for drink are hot and ring,
The same shall dream of wine-bibbing
Whilst he can lie or stand.

Queen Bersabe. Peace now, lords, for Godis head.
Ye chirk as starlings that be fed,

And gape as fishes newly dead :
The devil put your bones to bed,
Lo, this is all to say.

Secundus Miles. By Mahound, lords, I have good will
This devil's bird to wring and spill ;
For now meseems our game goes ill,
Ye have scant hearts to play.

Tertius Miles. Lo, sirs, this word is there said,
That Urias the knight is dead
Through some ill craft : by Poulis head,
I doubt his blood hath made so red
This bird that flew from the queen's bed
Whereof ye have such fear.

King David. Yea, my good knave, and is it said
That I can raise men from the dead ?
By God I think to have his head
Who saith words of my lady's bed
For any thief to hear.
Et percutiat eum in capite.

Queen Bersabe. I wis men shall spit at me,
And say it were but right for thee
That one should hang thee on a tree :
Ho ! it were a fair thing to see
The big stones bruise her false body ;
Fie ! who shall see her dead ?

King David. I rede you have no fear of this,
For as ye wot, the first good kiss
I had must be the last of his ;
Now are ye queen of mine, I wis,
And lady of a house that is
Full rich of meat and bread.

Primus Miles. I bid you make good cheer to be
So fair a queen as all men see.
And hold us for your lieges free :
By Peter's soul that hath the key
Ye have good hap of it.

Secundus Miles. I would that he were hanged
and dead
Who hath no joy to see your head
With gold about it, barred on red:
I hold him as a sow of lead
That is so scant of wit.

Tunc dicat NATHAN *propheta.* O king! I have a
word to thee:
The child that is in Bersabe
Shall wither without light to see;
This word is come of God by me
For sin that ye have done.
Because herein ye did not right,
To take the fair one lamb to smite
That was of Urias the knight:
Ye wist he had but one.
Full many sheep I wot ye had,
And many women, when ye bade
To do your will and keep you glad;
And a good crown about your head
With gold to show thereon.
This Urias had one poor house,
With low-barred latoun shot-windows,
And scant of corn to fill a mouse;
And rusty basnets for his brows,
To wear them to the bone.
Yea, the roofs also, as men sain,
Were thin to hold against the rain:
Therefore what rushes were there lain
Grew wet withouten foot of men;
The stancheons were all gone in twain
As sick man's flesh is gone.
Nathless he had great joy to see
The long hair of this Bersabe
Fall round her lap and round her knee
Even to her small soft feet, that be
Shod now with crimson royally,
And covered with clean gold.
Likewise great joy he had to kiss
Her throat, where now the scarlet is
Against her little chin, I wis,
That then was but cold.

No scarlet then her kirtle had,
And little gold about it sprad ;
But her red mouth was always glad
To kiss, albeit the eyes were sad
With love they had to hold.

Secundus Miles. How ! old thief, thy wits are lame ;
To clip such it is no shame ;
I rede you in the devil's name,
Ye come not here to make men game,
By Termagaunt that maketh grame,
I shall to-bete thine head.
Hic Diabolus capiat eum.
This knave hath sharp fingers, perfay ;
Mahound you thank and keep alway,
And give you good knees to pray ;
What man hath no lust to play,
The devil wring his ears, I say :
There is no more but wellaway,
For now am I dead.

King David. Certes his mouth is wried and black,
Full little pence be in his sack :
This devil hath him by the back,
It is no boot to lie.

Nathan. Sitteth now still, and learn of me
A little while, and ye shall see
The face of God's strength presently.
All queens made as this Bersabe,
All that were fair and foul ye be,
Come hither ; it am I.
Et hic omnes cantabunt.

Herodias. I am the queen Herodias.
This headband of my temples was
King Herod's gold band woven me ;
This broken dry staff in my hand
Was the queen's staff of a great land
Betwixen Perse and Samarie.
For that one dancing of my feet,
The fire is come in my green wheat,
From one sea to the other sea.

Aholibah. I am the queen Aholibah.
My lips kissed dumb the word of *Ah*
Sighed on strange lips grown sick thereby.
God wrought to me my royal bed :
The inner work thereof was red,
The outer work was ivory.
My mouth's heat was the heat of flame
For lust towards the kings that came
With horsemen riding royally.

Cleopatra. I am the queen of Ethiope.
Love bade my kissing eyelids ope,
That men beholding might praise love ;
My hair was wonderful and curled ;
My lips held fast the mouth o' the world
To spoil the strength and speech thereof.
The latter triumph in my breath
Bowed down the beaten brows of death,
Ashamed they had not wrath enough.

Abihail. I am the queen of Tyrians.
My hair was glorious for twelve spans,
That dried to loose dust afterward.
My stature was a strong man's length :
My neck was like a place of strength
Built with white walls, even and hard.
Like the first noise of rain leaves catch
One from another, snatch by snatch,
Is my praise, hissed against and marred.

Azubah. I am the queen of Amorites.
My face was like a place of lights
With multitudes at festival.
The glory of my gracious brows
Was like God's house made glorious
With colors upon either wall.
Between my brows and hair there was
A white space like a space of glass
With golden candles over all.

Aholah. I am the queen of Amalek.
There was no tender touch or fleck
To spoil my body or bared feet.

My words were soft like dulcimers,
And the first sweet of grape-flowers
  Made each side of my bosom sweet.
My raiment was as tender fruit
Whose rind smells sweet of spice-tree root,
  Bruised balm-blossom and budded wheat.

Ahinoam. I am the queen Ahinoam.
Like the throat of a soft slain lamb
  Was my throat, softer veined than his ;
My lips were as two grapes the sun
Lays his whole weight of heat upon
  Like a mouth heavy with a kiss :
My hair's pure purple a wrought fleece,
My temples therein as a piece
  Of a pomegranate's cleaving is.

Atarah. I am the queen Sidonian.
My face made faint the face of man,
  And strength was bound between my brows.
Spikenard was hidden in my ships,
Honey and wheat and myrrh in strips,
  White wools that shine as color does,
Soft linen dyed upon the fold,
Split spice and cores of scented gold,
  Cedar and broken calamus.

Semiramis. I am the queen Seniramis.
The whole world, and the sea that is
  In fashion like a chrysopras,
The noise of all men laboring,
The priest's mouth tired through thank sgiving,
  The sound of love in the blood's pause,
The strength of love in the blood's beat,
All these were cast beneath my feet,
  And all found lesser than I was.

Hesione. I am the queen Hesione.
The seasons that increased in me
  Made my face fairer than all men's.
I had the summer in my hair ;
And all the pale gold autumn air
  Was as the habit of my sense.

My body was as fire that shone ;
God's beauty that makes all things one
Was one among my handmaidens.

Chrysothemis. I am the queen of Samothrace.
God, making roses, made my face
As a rose filled up full with red.
My prows made sharp the straitened seas
From Pontus to that Chersonese
Whereon the ebbed Asian stream is shed.
My hair was a sweet scent that drips :
Love's breath begun about my lips
Kindle the lips of people dead.

Thomyris. I am the queen of Scythians.
My strength was like no strength of man's,
My face like day, my breast like spring.
My fame was felt in the extreme land
That hath sunshine on the one hand,
And on the other star-shining.
Yea, and the wind there fails of breath ;
Yea, and there life is waste like death ;
Yea, and there death is a glad thing.

Harhas. I am the queen of Anakim.
In the spent years whose speech is dim,
Whose raiment is the dust and death,
My stately body without stain
Shone as the shining race of rain
Whose hair a great wind scattereth.
Now hath God turned my lips to sighs,
Plucked off mine eyelids from mine eyes,
And sealed with seals my way of breath.

Myrrha. I am the queen Arabian.
The tears wherewith mine eyelids ran
Smell like my perfumed eyelids' smell.
A harsh thirst made my soft mouth hard,
That ached with kisses afterward ;
My brain rang like a beaten bell.
As tears on eyes, as fire on wood,
Sin fed upon my breath and blood,
Sin made my breasts subside and swell.

Pasiphae. I am the queen Pasiphae.
Not all the pure clean-colored sea
Could cleanse or cool my yearning veins;
Nor any root nor herb that grew,
Flag-leaves that let green water through,
Nor washing of the dews and rains.
From shame's pressed core I wrung the sweet
Fruit's savor that was death to eat,
Whereof no seed but death remains.

Sappho. I am the queen of Lesbians.
My love, that had no part in man's,
Was sweeter than all shape of sweet.
The intolerable infinite desire
Made my face pale like faded fire
When the ashen pyre falls through with heat.
My blood was hot wan wine of love,
And my song's sound the sound thereof,
The sound of the delight of it.

Messalina. I am the queen of Italy.
These were the signs God set on me:
A barren beauty subtle and sleek,
Curled carven hair, and cheeks worn wan
With fierce false lips of many a man,
Large temples where the blood ran weak,
A mouth athirst and amorous,
And hungering as the grave's mouth does,
That, being an hungered, cannot speak.

Amestris. I am the queen of Persians.
My breasts were lordlier than bright swans,
My body as amber fair and thin.
Strange flesh was given my lips for bread,
With poisonous hours my days were fed,
And my feet shod with adder-skin.
In Shushan toward Ecbatane
I wrought my joys with tears and pain,
My loves with blood and bitter sin.

Ephrath. I am the queen of Rephaim.
God, that some while refraineth him,
Made in the end a spoil of me.

My rumor was upon the world
As strong sound of swoln water hurled
  Through porches of the straining sea.
My hair was like the flag-flower,
And my breasts carven goodlier
  Than beryl with chalcedony.

Pasithea. I am the queen of Cypriotes.
Mine oarsmen, laboring with brown throats,
  Sang of me many a tender thing.
My maidens, girdled loose, and braced
With gold from bosom to white waist,
  Praised me between their wool-combing.
All that praise Venus all night long
With lips like speech and lids like song
  Praised me till song lost heart to sing.

Alaciel. I am the queen Alaciel.
My mouth was like that moist gold cell
  Whereout the thickest honey drips.
Mine eyes were as a gray-green sea:
The amorous blood that smote on me
  Smote to my feet and finger-tips.
My throat was whiter than the dove,
Mine eyelids as the seals of love,
  And as the doors of love my lips.

Erigone. I am the queen Erigone.
The wild wine shed as blood on me
  Made my face brighter than a bride's.
My large lips had the old thirst of earth,
Mine arms the might of the old sea's girth
  Bound round the whole world's iron sides.
Within mine eyes and in mine ears
Were music and the wine of tears,
  And light, and thunder of the tides.

Et hic exeant, et dicat BERSABE *regina.*
Alas! God, for thy great pity
  And for the might that is in thee,
Behold, I woful Bersabe

Cry out with stoopings of my knee,
And thy wrath laid and bound on me
  Till I may see thy love.
Behold, Lord, this child is grown
Within me between bone and bone
To make me mother of a son,
Made of my body with strong moan :
There shall not be another one
  That shall be made hereof.

King David. Lord God, alas ! what shall I sain ?
Lo, thou art as an hundred men
Both to break and build again :
The wild ways thou makest plain,
Thine hands hold the hail and rain,
And thy fingers both grape and grain ;
Of their largess we be all well fain,
  And of their great pity :
The sun thou madest of good gold,
Of clean silver the moon cold,
All the great stars thou hast told
As thy cattle in thy fold
Every one by his name of old ;
Wind and water thou hast in hold,
  Both the land and the long sea ;
Both the green sea and the land,
Lord God, thou hast in hand,
Both white water and gray sand ;
Upon thy right or thy left hand
There is no man that may stand :
  Lord, thou rue on me.
O wise Lord, if thou be keen
To note things amiss that been,
I am not worth a shell of bean
More than an old mare meagre and lean.
For all my wrong-doing with my queen,
It grew not out of heartès clean.
  But it began of her body.
For it fell in the hot May,
I stood within a paven way
Built of fair bright stone, perfay,
That is as fire of night and day,
  And lighteth all my house.

Therein be neither stones nor sticks,
Neither red nor white bricks,
But for cubits five or six
There is most goodly sardonyx,
And amber laid in rows.
It goes round about my roofs,
(If ye list ye shall have proofs)
There is good space for horse and hoofs,
Plain and nothing perilous.
For the fair green weather's heat,
And for the smell of leavès sweet,
It is no marvel, well ye weet,
A man to waxen amorous.
This I say now by my case
That spied forth of that royal place:
There I saw in no great space
Mine own sweet, both body and face,
Under the fresh boughs,
In a water that was there
She wesshe her goodly body bare,
And dried it with her owen hair:
Both her arms and her knees fair,
Both bosom and brows,
Both shoulders and eke thighs,
Tho she wesshe upon this wise;
Ever she sighed with little sighs,
And ever she gave God thank.
Yea, God wot I can well see yet
Both her breast and her sides all wet,
And her long hair withouten let
Spread sideways like a drawing net;
Full dear bought and full far let
Was that sweet thing there y-set;
It were a hard thing to forget
How both lips and eyen met,
Breast and breath sank.
So goodly a sight as there she was,
Lying looking on her glass
By wan water in green grass,
Yet saw never man.
So soft and great she was and bright
With all her body waxen white,
I woxe nigh blind to see the light

Shed out of it to left and right :
This bitter sin from that sweet sight
Between us twain began.
Nathan. Now, sir, be merry anon,
For ye shall have a full wise son,
Goodly and great of flesh and bone :
There shall no king be such an one,
I swear by Godis rood.
Therefore, lord, be merry here,
And go to meat withouten fear,
And hear a mass with goodly cheer ;
For to all folk ye shall be dear,
And all folk of your blood.

Et tunc dicant Laudamus.

ST. DOROTHY.

It hath been seen, and yet it shall be seen,
That out of tender mouths God's praise hath been
Made perfect, and with wood and simple string
He hath played music sweet as shawm-playing
To please himself with softness of all sound ;
And no small thing but hath been sometime found
Full sweet of use, and no such humbleness
But God hath bruised withal the sentences
And evidence of wise men witnessing ;
No leaf that is so soft a hidden thing
It never shall get sight of the great sun ;
The strength of ten has been the strength of one,
And lowliness has waxed imperious.
There was in Rome a man Theophilus,
Of right great blood and gracious ways, that had
All noble fashions to make people glad
And a soft life of pleasurable days.
He was a goodly man for one to praise,
Flawless and whole upward from foot to head ;
His arms were a red hawk that alway fed
On a small bird with feathers gnawed upon,
Beaten and plucked about the bosom-bone
Whereby a small round fleck like fire there was :

They called it in their tongue lampadias:
This was the banner of the lordly man.
In many straits of sea and reaches wan
Full of quick wind, and many a shaken firth,
It had seen fighting days of either earth,
Westward or east of waters Gaditane
(This was the place of sea-rocks under Spain
Called after the great praise of Hercules),
And north beyond the washing Pontic seas,
Tar windy Russian places fabulous,
And salt fierce tide of storm-swoln Bosphoras.
Now, as this lord came straying in Rome town,
He saw little lattice open down,
And after it a press of maiden's heads
That sat upon their cold small quiet beds
Talking, and played upon short-stringéd lutes;
And other some ground perfume out of roots
Gathered by marvellous moons in Asia,
Saffron and aloes and wild cassia,
Colored all through and smelling of the sun;
And over all these was a certain one
Clothed softly, with sweet herbs about her hair,
And bosom flowerful; her face more fair
Than sudden-singing April in soft lands;
Eyed like a gracious bird, and in both hands
She held a psalter painted green and red.
This Theophile laughed at the heart, and said,—
"Now God so help me hither and St. Paul,
As by the new time of their festival
I have good will to take this maid to wife."
And herewith fell to fancies of her life,
And soft half-thoughts that ended suddenly.
This is man's guise to please himself, when he
Shall not see one thing of his pleasant things,
Nor with outwatch of many travailings
Come to be eased of the least pain he hath
For all his love and all his foolish wrath,
And all the heavy manner of his mind.
Thus is he like a fisher fallen blind,
That casts his nets across the boat awry
To strike the sea, but lo! he striketh dry,
And plucks them back all broken for his pain,
And bites his beard, and casts across again,

And reaching wrong slips over in the sea.
So hath this man a strangled neck for fee,
For all his cost he chuckles in his throat.
This Theophile that little hereof wote
Laid wait to hear of her what she might be:
Men told him she had name of Dorothy,
And was a lady of a worthy house.
Thereat this knight grew inly glorious
That he should have a love so fair of place.
She was a maiden of most quiet face,
Tender of speech, and had no hardihood,
But was nigh feeble of her fearful blood;
Her mercy in her was so marvellous
From her least years, that seeing her schoolfellows
That read beside her stricken with a rod,
She would cry sore, and say some word to God
That he would ease her fellow of his pain.
There is no touch of sun or fallen rain
That ever fell on a more gracious thing.
In middle Rome there was in stone-working
The church of Venus painted royally.
The chapels of it were some two or three,
In each of them her tabernacle was,
And a wide window of six feet in glass
Colored with all her works in red and gold.
The altars had bright cloths and cups to hold
The wine of Venus for the services,
Made out of honey and crushed wood-berries
That shed sweet yellow through the thick wet red,
That on high days was borne upon the head
Of Venus' priest, for any man to drink;
So that in drinking he should fall to think
On some fair face, and in the thought thereof
Worship, and such should triumph in his love.
For this soft wine that did such grace and good
Was new trans-shaped and mixed with love's own blood,
That in the fight in Trojan time was bled;
For which came such a woe to Diomed
That he was stifled after in hard sea.
And some said that this wine-shedding should be
Made of the falling of Adonis' blood,
That curled upon the thorns and broken wood,

And round the gold silk shoes on Venus' feet:
The taste thereof was as hot honey sweet,
And in the mouth ran soft and riotous.
This was the holiness of Venus' house.
It was their worship, that in August days
Twelve maidens should go through those Roman ways
Naked, and having gold across their brows,
And their hair twisted in short golden rows,
To minister to Venus in this wise;
And twelve men chosen in their companies
To match these maidens by the altar-stair,
All in one habit, crowned upon the hair.
Among these men was chosen Theophile.
This knight went out, and prayed a little while,
Holding Queen Venus by her hands and knees:
I will give thee twelve royal images
Cut in glad gold, with marvels of wrought stone,
For thy sweet priests to lean and pray upon,
Jasper and hyacinth and chrysopras,
And the strange Asian thalamite that was
Hidden twelve ages under heavy sea
Among the little sleepy pearls, to be
A shrine lit over with soft candle-flame
Burning all night red as hot brows of shame,
So thou wilt be my lady without sin.
Goddess that art all gold outside and in,
Help me to serve thee in thy holy way.
Thou knowest, Love, that in my bearing day
There shone a laughter in the singing stars
Round the gold-ceilèd bride-bed wherein Mars
Touched thee and had thee in your kissing wise.
Now, therefore, sweet, kiss thou my maiden's eyes
That they may open graciously towards me;
And this new fashion of thy shrine shall be
As soft with gold as thine own happy head.
The goddess, that was painted with face red
Between two long green tumbled sides of sea,
Stooped her neck sideways, and spake pleasantly
Thou shalt have grace as thou art thrall of mine.
And with this came a savor of shed wine,
And plucked-out petals from a rose's head:
And softly with slow laughs of lip she said,—

Thou shalt have favor all thy days of me.
Then came Theophilus to Dorothy,
Saying: O sweet, if one should strive or speak
Against God's ways, he gets a beaten cheek
For all his wage and shame above all men.
Therefore I have no will to turn again
When God saith "go," lest a worse thing fall out.
Then she, misdoubting lest he went about
To catch her wits, made answer somewhat thus:
I have no will, my lord Theophilus,
To speak against this worthy word of yours;
Knowing how God's will in all speech endures,
That save by grace there may no thing be said.
Then Theophile waxed light from foot to head,
And softly fell upon this answering:
It is well seen you are a chosen thing
To do God service in his gracious way.
I will that you make haste and holiday
To go next year upon the Venus stair,
Covered none else, but crowned upon your hair,
And do the service that a maiden doth.
She said: But I that am Christ's maid were loath
To do this thing that hath such bitter name.
Thereat his brows were beaten with sore shame,
And he came off, and said no other word.
Then his eyes chanced upon his banner-bird,
And he fell fingering at the staff of it,
And laughed for wrath, and stared between his feet,
And out of a chafed heart he spake as thus:
Lo how she japes at me Theophilus,
Feigning herself a fool, and hard to love;
Yet in good time for all she boasteth of
She shall be like a little beaten bird.
And while his mouth was open in that word,
He came upon the house Janiculum,
Where some went busily, and other some
Talked in the gate called the gate glorious.
The emperor, which was one Gabalus,
Sat over all and drank chill wine alone.
To whom is come Theophilus anon,
And said as thus: *Beau sire, Dieu vous aide.*
And afterward sat under him, and said
All this thing through as ye have wholly heard.

This Gabalus laughed thickly in his beard.
Yea, this is righteousness and maiden rule.
Truly, he said, a maid is but a fool.
And japed at them as one full villanous,
In a lewd wise, this heathen Gabalus,
And sent his men to bind her as he bade.
Thus have they taken Dorothy the maid,
And haled her forth as men hale pick-purses :
A little need God knows they had of this,
To hale her by her maiden gentle hair.
Thus went she lowly, making a soft prayer,
As one who stays the sweet wine in his mouth,
Murmuring with eased lips, and is most loath
To have done wholly with the sweet of it :
Christ king, fair Christ, that knowest all men's wit
And all the feeble fashion of my ways,
O perfect God, that from all yesterdays
Abidest whole with morrows perfected,
I pray thee by thy mother's holy head,
Thou help me to do right, that I not slip :
I have no speech nor strength upon my lip,
Except thou help me, who art wise and sweet.
Do this, too, for those nails that clove thy feet,
Let me die maiden after many pains.
Though I be least among thy handmaidens,
Doubtless I shall take death more sweetly thus.
Now have they brought her to King Gabalus,
Who laughed in all his throat some breathing-whiles.
By God, he said, if one should leap two miles,
He were not pained about the sides so much.
This were a soft thing for a man to touch.
Shall one so chafe that hath such little bones ?
And shook his throat with thick and chuckled moans
For laughter that she had such holiness.
What aileth thee, wilt thou do services ?
It were good fare to fare as Venus doth.
Then said this lady with her maiden mouth,
Shamefaced, and something paler in the cheek :
Now, sir, albeit my wit and will to speak
Give me no grace in sight of worthy men,
For all my shame yet know I this again,
I may not speak, nor after down-lying
Rise up to take delight in lute-playing,

Nor sing nor sleep, nor sit and fold my hands,
But my soul in some measure understands
God's grace laid like a garment over me.
For this fair God that out of strong, sharp sea
Lifted the shapely and green-colored land,
And hath the weight of heaven in his hand
As one might hold a bird, and under him
The heavy golden planets beam by beam
Building the feasting-chambers of his house,
And the large world he holdeth with his brows,
And with the light of them astonisheth
All place and time and face of life and death,
And motion of the north wind and the south,
And is the sound within his angel's mouth
Of singing words and words of thanksgiving,
And is the color of the latter spring
And heat upon the summer and the sun,
And is beginning of all things begun,
And gathers in him all things to their end,
And with the fingers of his hand doth bend
The stretched-out sides of heaven like a sail,
And with his breath he maketh the red pale,
And fills with blood faint faces of men dead,
And with the sound between his lips are fed
Iron and fire and the white body of snow,
And blossom of all trees in places low,
And small bright herbs about the little hills,
And fruit pricked softly with birds' tender bills,
And flight of foam about green fields of sea,
And fourfold strength of the great winds that be
Moved always outward from beneath his feet,
And growth of grass and growth of sheavèd wheat
And all green flower of goodly-growing lands ;
And all these things he gathers with his hands,
And covers all their beauty with his wings :
The same, even God that governs all these things,
Hath set my feet to be upon his ways.
Now, therefore, for no painfulness of days
I shall put off this service bound on me.
Also, fair sir, ye know this certainly,
How God was in his flesh full chaste and meek,
And gave his face to shame, and either cheek
Gave up to smiting of men tyrannous.

And here with a great voice this Gabalus
Cried out and said: By God's blood and his bones,
This were good game betwixen night and nones
For one to sit and hearken to such saws:
I were as lief fall in some big beast's jaws
As hear these women's jaw-teeth chattering;
By God a woman is the harder thing,
One may not put a hook into her mouth.
Now by St. Luke I am so sore adrouth
For all these saws, I must needs drink again;
But I pray God deliver all us men
From all such noise of women and their heat.
That is a noble scripture, well I weet,
That likens women to an empty can;
When God said that, he was a full wise man.
I trow no man may blame him as for that.
And herewithal he drank a draught, and spat,
And said: Now shall I make an end hereof.
Come near, all men, and hearken for God's love,
And ye shall hear a jest or twain, God wot.
And spake as thus with mouth full thick and hot:
But thou do this, thou shalt be shortly slain.
Lo, sir, she said, this death and all this pain
I take in penance of my bitter sins.
Yea, now, quoth Gabalus, this game begins.
Lo, without sin one shall not live a span.
Lo, this is she that would not look on man
Between her fingers folded in thwart wise.
See how her shame hath smitten in her eyes
That was so clean, she had not heard of shame.
Certes, he said, by Gabalus my name,
This two years back I was not so well pleased.
This were good mirth for sick men to be eased,
And rise up whole and laugh at hearing of.
I pray thee, show us something of thy love,
Since thou wast maid thy gown is waxen wide.
Yea, maid I am, she said, and somewhat sighed,
As one who thought upon the low fair house
Where she sat working, with soft bended brows
Watching her threads, among the school-maidens.
And she thought well, now God had brought her thence,
She should not come to sew her gold again.

Then cried King Gabalus upon his men
To have her forth, and draw her with steel gins.
And as a man hag-ridden beats and grins,
And bends his body sidelong in his bed,
So wagged he with his body and knave's head,
Gaping at her, and blowing with his breath.
And in good time he gat an evil death
Out of his lewdness with his cursèd wives:
His bones were hewn asunder as with knives
For his misliving, certes it is said.
But all the evil wrought upon this maid,
It were full hard for one to handle it.
For her soft blood was shed upon her feet,
And all her body's color bruised and faint.
But she, as one abiding God's great saint,
Spake not nor wept for all this travail hard.
Wherefore the king commanded afterward
To slay her presently in all men's sight.
And it was now an hour upon the night,
And winter-time, and a few stars began.
The weather was yet feeble and all wan
For beating of a weighty wind and snow.
And she came walking in soft wise and slow,
And many men with faces piteous.
Then came this heavy cursing Gabalus,
That swore full hard into his drunken beard;
And faintly after without any word
Came Theophile some paces off the king.
And in the middle of this wayfaring
Full tenderly beholding her he said:
There is no word of comfort with men dead,
Nor any face and color of things sweet;
But always with lean cheeks and lifted feet
These dead men lie all aching to the blood
With bitter cold, their brows withouten hood
Beating for chill, their bodies swathed full thin:
Alas! what hire shall any have herein
To give his life and get such bitterness?
Also the soul going forth bodiless
Is hurt with naked cold, and no man saith
If there be house or covering for death
To hide the soul that is discomforted.
Then she beholding him a little said:

Alas! fair lord, ye have no wit of this;
For on one side death is full poor of bliss,
And, as ye say, full sharp of bone and lean;
But on the other side is good and green,
And hath soft flower of tender-colored hair
Grown on his head, and a red mouth as fair
As may be kissed with lips; thereto his face
Is as God's face, and in a perfect place
Full of all sun and color of straight boughs,
And waterheads about a painted house
That hath a mile of flowers either way
Outward from it, and blossom-grass of May
Thickening on many a side for length of heat,
Hath God set death upon a noble seat
Covered with green and flowered in the fold,
In likeness of a great king grown full old
And gentle with new temperance of blood;
And on his brows a purfled purple hood,
They may not carry any golden thing;
And plays some tune with subtle fingering
On a small cithern, full of tears and sleep,
And heavy pleasure that is quick to weep,
And sorrow with the honey in her mouth;
And for this might of music that he doth,
Are all souls drawn toward him with great love,
And weep for sweetness of the noise thereof,
And bow to him with worship of their knees;
And all the field is thick with companies
Of fair-clothed men that play on shawms and lutes,
And gather honey of the yellow fruits
Between the branches waxen soft and wide;
And all this peace endures in either side
Of the green land, and God beholdeth all.
And this is girdled with a round fair wall
Made a red stone, and cool with heavy leaves
Grown out against it, and green blossom cleaves
To the green chinks, and lesser wall-weed sweet,
Kissing the crannies that are split with heat,
And branches where the summer draws to head.
  And Theophile burnt in the cheek, and said:
Yea, could one see it, this were marvellous.
I pray you, at your coming to this house,
Give me some leaf of all those tree-branches;

Seeing how sharp and white our weather is,
There is no green nor gracious red to see.
Yea, sir, she said, that shall I certainly.
And from her long sweet throat without a fleck
Undid the gold, and through her stretched-out neck
The cold axe clove, and smote away her head:
Out of her throat the tender blood full red
Fell suddenly through all her long soft hair.
And with good speed for hardness of the air
Each man departed to his house again.
Lo! as fair color in the face of men
At seed-time of their blood, or in such wise
As a thing seen increaseth in men's eyes,
Caught first far off by sickly fits of sight,—
So a word said, if one shall hear aright,
Abides against the season of its growth.
This Theophile went slowly, as one doth
That is not sure for sickness of his feet;
And, counting the white stonework of the street,
Tears fell out of his eyes for wrath and love,
Making him weep more for the shame thereof
Than for true pain: so went he half a mile.
And women mocked him, saying: Theophile,
Lo, she is dead; what shall a woman have
That loveth such an one? so Christ me save,
I were as lief to love a man new-hung.
Surely this man has bitten on his tongue,
This makes him sad and writhled in his face.
And when they came upon the paven place
That was called sometime the place amorous,
There came a child before Theophilus,
Bearing a basket, and, suddenly:
Fair sir, this is my mistress Dorothy
That sends you gifts; and with this he was gone.
In all this earth there is not such an one
For color and straight stature made so fair.
The tender growing gold of his pure hair
Was as wheat growing, and his mouth as flame.
God called him Holy after his own name.
With gold cloth like fire burning he was clad.
But for the fair green basket that he had,
It was filled up with heavy white and red;
Great roses stained still where the first rose bled,

Burning at heart for shame their heart withholds;
And the sad color of strong marigolds
That have the sun to kiss their lips for love;
The flower that Venus' hair is woven of,
The color of fair apples in the sun,
Late peaches gathered when the heat was done,
And the slain air got breath; and after these
The fair faint-headed poppies drunk with ease,
And heaviness of hollow lilies red.
Then cried they all that saw these things, and said
It was God's doing, and was marvellous.
And in brief while this knight Theophilus
Is waxen full of faith, and witnesseth
Before the king, of God and love and death,
For which the king bade hang him presently.
A gallows of a goodly piece of tree
This Gabalus hath made to hang him on.
Forth of this world lo Theophile is gone
With a wried neck—God give us better fare
Than his that hath a twisted throat to wear!
But truly for his love God hath him brought
There where his heavy body grieves him nought,
Nor all the people plucking at his feet;
But in his face his lady's face is sweet.
And through his lips her kissing lips are gone.
God send him peace, and joy of such an one!
This is the story of St. Dorothy.
I will you of your mercy pray for me
Because I wrote these sayings for your grace,
That I may one day see her in the face.

THE TWO DREAMS.

(FROM BOCCACCIO.)

I WILL that if I say a heavy thing
Your tongues forgive me; seeing ye know that spring
Has flecks and fits of pain to keep her sweet,
And walks somewhile with winter-bitten feet.
Moreover it sounds often well to let
One string, when ye play music, keep at fret

The whole song through ; one petal that is dead
Confirms the roses, be they white or red ;
Dead sorrow is not sorrowful to hear
As the thick noise that breaks mid weeping were ;
The sick sound aching in a lifted throat
Turns to sharp silver of a perfect note ;
And though the rain falls often, and with rain
Late autumn falls on the old red leaves like pain,
I deem that God is not disquieted.
Also while men are fed with wine and bread,
They shall be fed with sorrow at his hand.
  There grew a rose-garden in Florence land
More fair than many ; all red summers through
The leaves smelt sweet and sharp of rain, and blew
Sideways with tender wind ; and therein fell
Sweet sound wherewith the green waxed audible,
As a bird's will to sing disturbed his throat,
And set the sharp wings forward like a boat
Pushed through soft water, moving his brown side
Smooth-shapen as a maid's, and shook with pride
His deep warm bosom, till the heavy sun's
Set face of heat stopped all the songs at once.
The ways were clean to walk, and delicate ;
And when the windy white of March grew late,
Before the trees took heart to face the sun
With ravelled raiment of lean winter on,
The roots were thick and hot with hollow grass.
  Some roods away a lordly house there was,
Cool with broad courts and latticed passage wet
From rush-flowers and lilies ripe to set,
Sown close among the strewings of the floor ;
And either wall of the slow corridor
Was dim with deep device of gracious things ;
Some angel's steady mouth and weight of wings
Shut to the side ; or Peter with straight stole
And beard cut black against the aureole
That spanned his head from nape to crown ; there
Mary's gold hair, thick to the girdle-tie
Wherein was bound a child with tender feet ;
Or the broad cross with blood nigh brown on it.
  Within this house a righteous lord abode,
Ser Averardo ; patient of his mood,
And just of judgment ; and to child he had

A maid so sweet that her mere sight made glad
Men sorrowing, and unbound the brows of hate;
And where she came, the lips that pain made strait
Waxed warm and wide, and from untender grew
Tender as those that sleep brings patience to.
Such long locks had she, that with knee to chin
She might have wrapped and warmed her feet therein.
Right seldom fell her face on weeping wise;
Gold hair she had, and golden-colored eyes,
Filled with clear light and fire and large repose
Like a fair hound's; no man there is but knows
Her face was white, and thereto she was tall;
In no wise lacked there any praise at all
To her most perfect and pure maiden-hood;
No sin I think there was in all her blood.
She, where a gold grate shut the roses in,
Dwelt daily through deep summer weeks, through green
Flushed hours of rain upon the leaves; and there
Love made him room and space to worship her
With tender worship of bowed knees, and wrought
Such pleasure as the pained sense palates not
For weariness, but at one taste undoes
The heart of its strong sweet, is ravenous
Of all the hidden honey; words and sense
Fail through the tune's imperious prevalence.
In a poor house this lover kept apart,
Long communing with patience next his heart
If love of his might move that face at all,
Tuned evenwise with colors musical;
Then after length of days he said thus: "Love,
For love's own sake and for the love thereof,
Let no harsh words untune your gracious mood;
For good it were, if any thing be good,
To comfort me in this pain's plague of mine;
Seeing thus, how neither sleep nor bread nor wine
Seems pleasant to me, yea no thing that is
Seems pleasant to me; only I know this,
Love's ways are sharp for palms of piteous feet
To travel, but the end of such is sweet:
Now do with me as seemeth you the best."
She mused a little, as one holds his guest

By the hand musing, with her face borne down :
Then said, " Yea, though such bitter seed be sown,
Have no more care of all that you have said ;
Since if there is no sleep will bind your head,
Lo, I am fain to help you certainly :
Christ knoweth, sir, if I would have you die ;
There is no pleasure when a man is dead."
Thereat he kissed her hands and yellow head,
And clipped her fair long body many times :
I have no wit to shape in written rhymes
A scanted tithe of this great joy they had.
They were too near love's secret to be glad,
As whoso deems the core will surely melt
From the warm fruit his lips caress, hath felt
Some bitter kernel where the teeth shut hard ;
Or as sweet music sharpens afterward,
Being half disrelished both for sharp and sweet ;
As sea-water, having killed over-heat
In a man's body, chills it with faint ache ;
So their sense, burdened only for love's sake,
Failed for pure love ; yet so time served their wit,
They saved each day some gold reserves of it,
Being wiser in love's riddle than such be
Whom fragments feed with his chance charity.
All things felt sweet were felt sweet overmuch ;
The rose-thorn's prickle dangerous to touch,
And flecks of fire in the thin leaf-shadows ;
Too keen the breathèd honey of the rose,
Its red too harsh a weight on feasted eyes ;
They were so far gone in love's histories,
Beyond all shape and color and mere breath,
Where pleasure has for kinsfolk sleep and death,
And strength of soul and body waxen blind
For weariness, and flesh entoiled with mind,
When the keen edge of sense foretasteth sin.
Even this green place the summer caught them in
Seemed half deflowered and sick with beaten leaves
In their strayed eyes ; these gold flower-fumèd eves
Burnt out to make the sun's love-offering,
The midnoon's prayer, the rose's thanksgiving,
The trees' weight burdening the strengthless air,
The shape of her stilled eyes, her colored hair,
Her body's balance from the moving feet,—

All this, found fair, lacked yet one grain of sweet
It had some warm weeks back : so perisheth
On May's new lip the tender April breath :
So those same walks the wind sowed lilies in
All April through, and all their latter kin
Of languid leaves whereon the autumn blows,—
The dead red raiment of the last year's rose,—
The last year's laurel, and the last year's love,
Fade, and grow things that death grows weary of.
What man will gather in red summer-time
The fruit of some obscure and hoary rhyme
Heard last midwinter, taste the heart in it,
Mould the smooth semitones afresh, refit
The fair limbs ruined, flush the dead blood through
With color, make all broken beauties new
For love's new lesson—shall not such find pain
When the marred music laboring in his brain
Frets him with sweet sharp fragments, and lets slip
One word that might leave satisfied his lip,—
One touch that might put fire in all the chords ?
This was her pain : to miss from all sweet words
Some taste of sound, diverse and delicate,—
Some speech the old love found out to compensate
For seasons of shut lips and drowsiness ;
Some grace, some word the old love found out to bless
Passionless months and undelighted weeks.
The flowers had lost their summer-scented cheeks,
Their lips were no more sweet than daily breath :
The year was plagued with instances of death.
So fell it, these were sitting in cool grass
With leaves about, and many a bird there was
Where the green shadow thickliest impleached
Soft fruit and writhen spray and blossom bleached
Dry in the sun or washed with rains to white :
Her girdle was pure silk, the bosom bright
With purple as purple water and gold wrought in.
One branch had touched with dusk her lips and chin,
Made violet of the throat, abashed with shade
The breast's bright plaited work : but nothing frayed
The sun's large kiss on the luxurious hair.
Her beauty was new color to the air,
And music to the silent many birds.

Love was an-hungered for some perfect words
To praise her with ; but only her low name
" Andrevuola " came thrice, and thrice put shame
In her clear cheek, so fruitful with new red
That for pure love straightway shame's self was dead.
Then with lids gathered as who late had wept,
She began saying, " I have so little slept,
My lids drowse now against the very sun ;
Yea, the brain aching with a dream begun
Beats like a fitful blood ; kiss but both brows,
And you shall pluck my thoughts grown dangerous
Almost away." He said thus, kissing them :
" O sole sweet thing that God is glad to name,
My one gold gift, if dreams be sharp and sore
Shall not the waking time increase much more
With taste and sound, sweet eyesight or sweet scent?
Has any heat too hard and insolent
Burnt bare the tender married leaves, undone
The maiden grass shut under from the sun ?
Where in this world is room enough for pain ?"
The feverish finger of love had touched again
Her lips with happier blood ; the pain lay meek
In her fair face, nor altered lip nor cheek
With pallor or with pulse ; but in her mouth
Love thirsted as a man wayfaring doth,
Making it humble as weak hunger is.
She lay close to him, bade do this and this,
Say that, sing thus : then almost weeping-ripe
Crouched, then laughed low. As one that fain would wipe
The old record out of old things done and dead,
She rose, she heaved her hands up, and waxed red
For wilful heart and blameless fear of blame ;
Saying, " Though my wits be weak, this is no shame
For a poor maid whom love so punisheth
With heats of hesitation and stopped breath
That with my dreams I live yet heavily
For pure sad heart and faith's humility.
Now be not wroth, and I will show you this.
" Methought our lips upon their second kiss
Met in this place, and a fair day we had,
And fair soft leaves that waxed and were not sad
With shaken rain, or bitten through with drouth ;

When I, beholding ever how your mouth
Waited for mine, the throat being fallen back,
Saw crawl thereout a live thing flaked with black
Specks of brute slime and leper-colored scale,
A devil's hide with foul flame-writhen grail
Fashioned where hell's heat festers loathsomest;
And that brief speech may ease me of the rest,
Thus were you slain and eaten of the thing.
My waked eyes felt the new day shuddering
On their low lids, felt the whole east so beat,
Pant with close pulse of such a plague-struck heat,
As if the palpitating dawn drew breath
For horror, breathing between life and death,
Till the sun sprang blood-bright and violent."
So finishing, her soft strength wholly spent,
She gazed each way, lest some brute-hoovèd thing,
The timeless travail of hell's child-bearing,
Should threat upon the sudden: whereat he,
For relish of her tasted misery
And tender little thornprick of her pain,
Laughed with mere love. What lover among men
But hath his sense fed sovereignly 'twixt whiles
With tears and covered eyelids and sick smiles
And soft disaster of a painèd face?
What pain established in so sweet a place,
But the plucked leaf of it smells fragrantly?
What color burning man's wide-open eye
But may be pleasurably seen? what sense
Keeps in its hot sharp extreme violence
No savor of sweet things? The bereaved blood
And emptied flesh in their most broken mood
Fail not so wholly, famish not when thus
Past honey keeps the starved lip covetous.
Therefore this speech from a glad mouth began,
Breathed in her tender hair and temples wan
Like one prolonged kiss while the lips had breath:
"Sleep, that abides in vassalage of death
And in death's service wears out half his age,
Hath his dreams full of deadly vassalage,
Shadow and sound of things ungracious;
Fair shallow faces, hooded bloodless brows,
And mouths past kissing; yea, myself have had
As harsh a dream as holds your eyelids sad.

"This dream I tell you came three nights ago:
In full mid sleep I took a whim to know
How sweet things might be; so I turned and thought;
But save my dream all sweet availed me not.
First came a smell of pounded spice and scent
Such as God ripens in some continent
Of utmost amber in the Syrian sea;
And breaths as though some costly rose could be
Spoiled slowly, wasted by some bitter fire
To burn the sweet out leaf by leaf, and tire
The flower's poor heart with heat and waste, to make
Strong magic for some perfumed woman's sake.
Then a cool naked sense beneath my feet
Of bud and blossom; and sound of veins that beat
As if a lute should play of its own heart
And fearfully, not smitten of either part;
And all my blood it filled with sharp and sweet
As gold swoln grain fills out the huskèd wheat;
So I rose naked from the bed, and stood
Counting the mobile measure in my blood
Some pleasant while, and and through each limb there came
Swift little pleasures pungent as a flame,
Felt in the thrilling flesh and veins as much
As the outer curls that feel the comb's first touch
Thrill to the roots and shiver as from fire;
And blind between my dreams and my desire
I seemed to stand, and held my spirit still
Lest this should cease. A child whose fingers spill
Honey from cells forgotten of the bee
Is less afraid to stir the hive and see
Some wasp's bright black inside, than I to feel
Some finger-touch disturb the flesh like steel.
I prayed thus: Let me catch a secret here
So sweet, it sharpens the sweet taste of fear,
And takes the mouth with edge of wine; I would
Have here some color and smooth shape as good
As those in heaven whom the chief garden hides
With low grape-blossom veiling their white sides,
And lesser tendrils thot so blind and bind
Their eyes and feet, that if one come behind
To touch their hair they see not, neither fly;
This would I see in heaven, and not die.

So praying, I had nigh cried out and knelt,
So wholly my prayer filled me: till I felt
In the dumb night's warm weight of glowing gloom
Somewhat that altered all my sleeping-room,
And made it like a green low place wherein
Maids mix to bathe: one sets her small warm chin
Against a ripple, that the angry pearl
May flow like flame about her: the next curl
Dips in some eddy colored of the sun
To wash the dust well out: another one
Holds a straight ankle in her hand and swings
With lavish body sidelong, so that rings
Of sweet fierce water, swollen and splendid, fail
All round her fine and floated body pale,
Swayed flower-fashion, and her balanced side
Swerved edgeways lets the weight of water slide,
As taken in some underflow of sea
Swerves the banked gold of sea-flowers; but she
Pulls down some branch to keep her perfect head
Clear of the river: even from wall to bed,
I tell you, was my room transfigured so.
Sweet, green and warm it was, nor could one know
If there were walls or leaves, or if there was
No bed's green curtain, but mere gentle grass.
There were set also hard against the feet
Gold plates with honey and green grapes to eat,
With the cool water's noise to hear in rhymes:
And a wind warmed me full of furze and limes
And all hot sweets the heavy summer fills
To the round brim of smooth cup-shapen hills.
Next the grave walking of a woman's feet
Made my veins hesitate, and gracious heat
Made thick the lids and leaden on mine eyes:
And I thought ever, surely it were wise
Not yet to see her: this may last (who knows?)
Five minutes; the poor rose is twice a rose
Because it turns a face to her, the wind
Sing that way; hath this woman ever sinned,
I wonder? as a boy with apple-rind,
I played with pleasures, made them to my mind,
Changed each ere tasting. When she came indeed,
First her hair touched me, then I grew to feed
On the sense of her hand; her mouth at last

Touched me between the cheek and lip, and past
Over my face with kisses here and there
Sown in and out across the eyes and hair.
Still I said nothing ; till she set her face
More close and harder on the kissing place,
And her mouth caught like a snake's mouth, and stung
So faint and tenderly, the fang scarce clung
More than a bird's foot : yet a wound it grew,
A great one, let this red mark witness you
Under the left breast ; and the stroke thereof
So clove my sense that I woke out of love,
And knew not what this dream was, nor had wit ;
But now God knows if I have skill of it."
Hereat she laid one palm against her lips
To stop their trembling ; as when water slips
Out of a beak-mouthed vessel with faint noise,
And chuckles in the narrowed throat, and cloys
The carven rims with murmuring, so came
Words in her lips with no word right of them,
A beaten speech thick and disconsolate,
Till his smile ceasing waxed compassionate
Of her sore fear that grew from anything,—
The sound of the strong summer thickening
In heated leaves of the smooth apple-trees :
The day's breath felt about the ash-branches,
And noises of the noon whose weight still grew
On the hot heavy-headed flowers, and drew
Their red mouths open till the rose-heart ached ;
For eastward all the crowding rose was slaked
And soothed with shade : but westward all its growth
Seemed to breathe hard with heat as a man doth
Who feels his temples newly feverous.
And even with such motion in her brows
As that man hath in whom sick days begin,
She turned her throat and spake, her voice being thin
As a sick man's, sudden and tremulous ;
" Sweet, if this end be come indeed on us,
Let us love more ; " and held his mouth with hers.
As the first sound of flooded hill-waters
Is heard by people of the meadow-grass,
Or ever a wandering waif of ruin pass

With whirling stones and foam of the brown stream
Flaked with fierce yellow : so beholding him
She felt before tears came her eyelids wet,
Saw the face deadly thin where life was yet,
Heard his throat's harsh last moan before it clomb :
And he, with close mouth passionate and dumb,
Burned at her lips : so lay they without speech,
Each grasping other, and the eyes of each
Fed in the other's face : till suddenly
He cried out with a little broken cry
This word, "O help me, sweet, I am but dead!"
And even so saying, the color of fair red
Was gone out of his face, and his blood's beat
Fell, and stark death made sharp his upward feet
And pointed hands ; and without moan he died.
Pain smote her sudden in the brows and side,
Strained her lips open, and made burn her eyes :
For the pure sharpness of her miseries
She had no heart's pain, but mere body's wrack.
But at the last her beaten blood drew back
Slowly upon her face, and her stunned brows
Suddenly grown aware and piteous
Gathered themselves, her eyes shone, her hard breath
Came as though one nigh dead came back from death ;
Her lips throbbed, and life trembled through her hair.
And in brief while she thought to bury there
The dead man, that her love might lie with him
In a sweet bed under the rose-roots dim
And soft earth round the branchèd apple-trees,
Full of hushed heat and heavy with great ease,
And no man entering divide him thence.
Wherefore she bade one of her handmaidens
To be her help to do upon this wise.
And saying so the tears out of her eyes
Fell without noise, and comforted her heart:
Yea, her great pain eased of the sorest part
Began to soften in her sense of it.
There under all the little branches sweet
The place was shapen of his burial :
They shed thereon no thing funereal,
But colored leaves of latter rose-blossom,

Stems of soft grass, some withered red and some
Fair and flesh-blooded ; and spoil splendider
Of marigold and great spent sunflower.
And afterwards she came back without word
To her own house ; two days went, and the third
Went, and she showed her father of this thing.
And for great grief of her soul's travailing
He gave consent she should endure in peace
Till her life's end ; yea, till her time should cease,
She should abide in fellowship of pain.
And having lived a holy year or twain
She died of pure waste heart and weariness.
And for love's honor in her love's distress
This word was written over her tomb's head :
" Here dead she lieth, for whose sake Love is dead."

AHOLIBAH.

In the beginning God made thee
A woman well to look upon,
Thy tender body as a tree
Whereon cool wind hath always blown
Till the clean branches be well grown.

There was none like thee in the land ;
The girls that were thy bondwomen
Did bind thee with a purple band
Upon thy forehead, that all men
Should know thee for God's handmaiden.

Strange raiment clad thee like a bride,
With silk to wear on hands and feet,
And plates of gold on either side :
Wine made thee glad, and thou didst eat
Honey, and choice of pleasant meat.

And fishers in the middle sea
Did get thee sea-fish and sea-weeds
In color like the robes on thee ;
And curious work of plated reeds,
And woods wherein live purple bleeds.

And round the edges of thy cup
Men wrought thee marvels out of gold,
Strong snakes with lean throats lifted up,
Large eyes whereon the brows had hold,
And scaly things their slime kept cold.

For thee they blew soft winds in flutes,
And ground sweet roots for cunning scent;
Made slow because of many lutes,
The wind among thy chambers went
Wherein no light was violent.

God called thy name Aholibah,
His tabernacle being in thee,
A witness through waste Asia;
Thou wert a tent sewn cunningly
With gold and colors of the sea.

God gave thee gracious ministers
And all their work who plait and weave:
The cunning of embroiderers
That sew the pillow to the sleeve,
And likeness of all things that live.

Thy garments upon thee were fair
With scarlet and with yellow thread;
Also the weaving of thine hair
Was as fine gold upon thy head,
And thy silk shoes were sewn with red.

All sweet things he bade sift, and ground
As a man grindeth wheat in mills
With strong wheels always going round;
He gave thee corn, and grass that fills
The cattle on a thousand hills.

The wine of many seasons fed
Thy mouth, and made it fair and clean;
Sweet oil was poured out on thy head,
And ran down like cool rain between
The strait close locks it melted in.

The strong men and the captains knew
Thy chambers wrought and fashioned
With gold and covering of blue,
And the blue raiment of thine head
Who satest on a stately bed.

All these had on their garments wrought
The shape of beasts and creeping things.
The body that availeth not,
Flat backs of worms and veined wings,
And the lewd bulk that sleeps and stings.

Also the chosen of the years,
The multitude being at ease,
With sackbuts and with dulcimers
And noise of shawms and psalteries,
Made mirth within the ears of these.

But as a common woman doth,
Thou didst think evil and devise ;
The sweet smell of thy breast and mouth,
Thou madest as the harlot's wise,
And there was painting on thine eyes.

Yea, in the woven guest-chamber
And by the painted passages
Where the strange, gracious paintings were,
State upon state of companies,
There came on thee the lust of these.

Because of shapes on either wall
Sea-colored from some rare blue shell
At many a Tyrian interval,
Horsemen on horses, girdled well,
Delicate and desirable,—

Thou saidest : I am sick of love :
Stay with me flagons, comfort me
With apples, for my pain thereof,
Till my hands gather in his tree
That fruit wherein my lips would be.

Yea, saidest thou, I will go up
When there is no more shade than one
May cover with a hollow cup,
And make my bed against the sun
Till my blood's violence be done.

Thy mouth was leant upon the wall
Against the painted mouth, thy chin
Touched the hair's painted curve and fall;
Thy deep throat, fallen lax and thin,
Worked as the blood's beat worked therein.

Therefore, O thou, Aholibah,
God is not glad because of thee;
And thy fine gold shall pass away
Like those fair coins of ore that be
Washed over by the middle sea.

Then will one make thy body bare
To strip it of all gracious things,
And pluck the cover from thine hair,
And break the gift of many kings,
Thy wrist-rings and thine ankle-rings.

Likewise the man whose body joins
To thy smooth body, as was said,
Who hath a girdle on his loins,
And dyed attire upon his head,—
The same who, seeing, worshipped,

Because thy face was like the face
Of a clean maiden that smells sweet,
Because thy gait was as the pace
Of one that opens not her feet,
And is not heard within the street:

Even he, O thou, Aholibah,
Made separate from thy desire,
Shall cut thy nose and ears away,
And bruise thee for thy body's hire,
And burn the residue with fire.

Then shall the heathen people say,
The multitude being at ease;
Lo, this is that Aholibah
Whose name was blown among strange seas,
Grown old with soft adulteries.

Also her bed was made of green,
Her windows beautiful for glass,
That she had made her bed between:
Yea, for pure lust her body was
Made like white summer-colored grass.

Her raiment was a strong man's spoil;
Upon a table by a bed
She set mine incense and mine oil
To be the beauty of her head,
In chambers walled about with red.

Also between the walls she had
Fair faces of strong men portrayed;
All girded round the loins, and clad
With several cloths of woven braid
And garments marvellously made.

Therefore the wrath of God shall be
Set as a watch upon her way;
And whoso findeth by the sea
Blown dust of bones will hardly say
If this were that Aholibah.

MADONNA MIA.

UNDER green apple-boughs
That never a storm will rouse,
My lady hath her house
Between two bowers;
In either of the twain,
Red roses full of rain;
She hath for bondwomen
All kind of flowers.

She hath no handmaid fair
To draw her curled gold hair
Through rings of gold that bear
  Her whole hair's weight;
She hath no maids to stand
Gold-clothed on either hand:
In all the great green land
  None is so great.

She hath no more to wear
But one white hood of vair
Drawn over eyes and hair,
  Wrought with strange gold,
Made for some great queen's head,
Some fair great queen since dead;
And one strait gown of red
  Against the cold.

Beneath her eyelids deep
Love lying seems asleep,
Love, swift to wake, to weep,
  To laugh, to gaze;
Her breasts are like white birds,
And all her gracious words
As water-grass to herds
  In the June-days.

To her all dews that fall
And rains are musical;
Her flowers are fed from all,
  Her joy from these;
In the deep-feathered firs
Their gift of joy is hers,
In the least breath that stirs
  Across the trees.

She grows with greenest leaves,
Ripens with reddest sheaves,
Forgets, remembers, grieves,
  And is not sad;
The quiet lands and skies
Leave light upon her eyes:
None knows her, weak or wise,
  Or tired or glad.

None knows, none understands,
What flowers are like her hands;
Though you should search all lands
  Wherein time grows,
What snows are like her feet,
Though his eyes burn with heat
Through gazing on my sweet,
  Yet no man knows.

Only this thing is said:
That white and gold and red,
God's three chief words, man's bread
  And oil and wine,
Were given her for dowers,
And kingdom of all hours,
And grace of goodly flowers
  And various vine.

This is my lady's praise:
God after many days
Wrought her in unknown ways,
  In sunset lands.
This was my lady's birth:
God gave her might and mirth,
And laid his whole sweet earth
  Between her hands.

Under deep apple-boughs
My lady hath her house;
She wears upon her brows
  The flower thereof;
All saying but what God saith
To her is as vain breath;
She is more strong than death,
  Being strong as love.

THE KING'S DAUGHTER.

We were ten maidens in the green corn,
  Small red leaves in the mill-water:
Fairer maidens never were born,
  Apples of gold for the king's daughter.

We were ten maidens by a well-head,
Small white birds in the mill-water :
Sweeter maidens never were wed,
Rings of red for the king's daughter.

The first to spin, the second to sing,
Seeds of wheat in the mill-water ;
The third may was a goodly thing,
White bread and brown for the king's daughter.

The fourth to sew, and the fifth to play,
Fair green weed in the mill-water ;
The sixth may was a goodly may,
White wine and red for the king's daughter.

The seventh to woo, the eighth to wed,
Fair thin reeds in the mill-water ;
The ninth had gold work on her head,
Honey in the comb for the king's daughter.

The ninth had gold work round her hair,
Fallen flowers in the mill-water ;
The tenth may was goodly and fair,
Golden gloves for the king's daughter.

We were ten maidens in a field green,
Fallen fruit in the mill-water :
Fairer maidens never have been,
Golden sleeves for the king's daughter.

By there comes the king's young son,
A little wind in the mill-water ;
"Out of ten maidens ye'll grant me one,"
A crown of red for the king's daughter.

"Out of ten mays ye'll give me the best,"
A little rain in the mill-water ;
A bed of yellow straw for all the rest,
A bed of gold for the king's daughter.

He's ta'en out the goodliest,
Rain that rains in the mill-water ;
A comb of yellow shell for all the rest,
A comb of gold for the king's daughter.

He's made her bed to the goodliest,
  Wind and hail in the mill-water ;
A grass girdle for all the rest,
  A girdle of arms for the king's daughter.

He's set his heart to the goodliest,
  Snow that snows in the mill-water ;
Nine little kisses for all the rest,
  An hundredfold for the king's daughter.

He's ta'en his leave at the goodliest,
  Broken boats in the mill-water ;
Golden gifts for all the rest,
  Sorrow of heart for the king's daughter.

"Ye'll make a grave for my fair body,"
  Running rain in the mill-water ;
"And ye'll streek my brother at the side of me,"
  The pains of hell for the king's daughter.

MAY JANET.

(BRETON.)

"STAND up, stand up, thou May Janet,
  And go to the wars with me."
He's drawn her by both hands,
  With her face against the sea.

"He that strews red shall gather white,
  He that sows white reap red,
Before your face and my daughter's
  Meet in a marriage-bed.

"Gold coin shall grow in the yellow field,
  Green corn in the green sea-water,
And red fruit grow of the rose's red,
  Ere your fruit grow in her."

"But I shall have her by land," he said,
  "Or I shall have her by sea,
Or I shall have her by strong treason
  And no grace go with me."

Her father's drawn her by both hands,
He's rent her gown from her,
He's ta'en the smock round her body,
Cast in the sea-water.

The captain's drawn her by both sides
Out of the fair green sea:
"Stand up, stand up, thou May Janet,
And come to the war with me."

The first town they came to,
There was a blue bride-chamber;
He clothed her on with silk,
And belted her with amber.

The second town they came to,
The bridesmen feasted knee to knee;
He clothed her on with silver,
A stately thing to see.

The third town they came to,
The bridesmaids all had gowns of gold;
He clothed her on with purple,
A rich thing to behold.

The last town they came to,
He clothed her white and red,
With a green flag either side of her
And a gold flag overhead.

THE BLOODY SON.

(FINNISH.)

"O WHERE have ye been the morn sae late,
My merry son, come tell me hither?
O where have ye been the morn sae late?
And I wot I hae but anither."
"By the water-gate, by the water-gate,
O dear mither."

"And whatten kin' o' wark had ye there to make,
My merry son, come tell me hither?
And whatten kin' o' wark had ye there to make?
And I wot I hae but anither."
"I watered my steeds with water frae the lake,
O dear mither."

"Why is your coat sae fouled the day,
My merry son, come tell me hither?
Why is your coat sae fouled the day?
And I wot I hae but anither."
"The steeds were stamping sair by the weary banks of clay,
O dear mither."

"And where gat ye thae sleeves of red,
My merry son, come tell me hither?
And where gat ye thae sleeves of red?
And I wot I hae but anither."
"I have slain my ae brither by the weary water-head,
O dear mither."

"And where will ye gang to mak your mend,
My merry son, come tell me hither?
And where will ye gang to mak your mend?
And I wot I hae not anither."
"The warldis way, to the warldis end,
O dear mither."

And what will ye leave your father dear,
My merry son, come tell me hither?
And what will ye leave your father dear?
And I wot I hae not anither."
"The wood to fell and the logs to bear,
For he'll never see my body mair,
O dear mither."

"And what will ye leave your mither dear,
My merry son, come tell me hither?
And what will ye leave your mither dear?
And I wot I hae not anither."
"The wool to card and the wool to wear,
For ye'll never see my body mair,
O dear mither."

"And what will ye leave for your wife to take,
My merry son, come tell me hither?
And what will ye leave for your wife to take?
And I wot I hae not anither."
"A goodly gown and a fair new make,
For she'll do nae mair for my body's sake,
O dear mither."

"And what will ye leave your young son fair,
My merry son, come tell me hither?
And what will ye leave your young son fair?
And I wot ye hae not anither."
"A twiggen school-rod for his body to bear,
Though it garred him greet he'll get nae mair,
O dear mither."

"And what will ye leave your little daughter sweet,
My merry son, come tell me hither?
And what will ye leave your little daughter sweet?
And I wot ye hae not anither."
"Wild mulberries for her mouth to eat,
She'll get nae mair though it garred her greet,
O dear mither."

"And when will ye come back frae roamin',
My merry son, come tell me hither?
And when will ye come back frae roamin'?
And I wot I hae not anither."
"When the sunrise out of the north is comen,
O dear mither."

"When shall the sunrise on the north side be,
My merry son, come tell me hither?
When shall the sunrise on the north side be?
And I wot I hae not anither."
"When chuckie-stanes shall swim in the sea,
O dear mither."

"When shall stanes in the sea swim,
My merry son, come tell me hither?
When shall stanes in the sea swim?
And I wot I hae not anither."
"When birdies' feathers are as lead therein,
O dear mither."

"When shall feathers be as lead,
My merry son, come tell me hither?
When shall feathers be as lead?
And I wot I hae not anither."
"When God shall judge between the quick and dead,
O dear mither."

THE SEA-SWALLOWS.

This fell when Christmas lights were done,
Red rose leaves will never make wine;
But before the Easter lights begun;
The ways are sair fra' the Till to the Tyne.

Two lovers sat where the rowan blows,
And all the grass is heavy and fine,
By the gathering place of the sea-swallows
When the wind brings them over Tyne.

Blossom of broom will never make bread,
Red rose leaves will never make wine;
Between her brows she is grown red,
That was full white in the fields by Tyne.

"O what is this thing ye have on,
Show me now, sweet daughter of mine?"
"O father, this is my little son
That I found hid in the sides of Tyne.

"O what will you give my son to eat,
Red rose leaves will never make wine?"
"Fen-water and adder's meat,
The ways are sair fra' the Till to the Tyne."

"Or what will yet get my son to wear,
Red rose leaves will never make wine?"
"A weed and a web of nettle's hair,
The ways are sair fra' the Till to the Tyne."

"Or what will ye take to line his bed,
Red rose leaves will never make wine?"
"Two black stones at the kirk-wall's head,
The ways are sair fra' the Till to the Tyne."

"Or what will ye give my son for land,
Red rose leaves will never make wine?"
"Three girl's paces of red sand,
The ways are sair fra' the Till to the Tyne."

"Or what will ye give me for my son,
Red rose leaves will never make wine?"
"Six times to kiss his young mouth on,
The ways are sair fra' the Till to the Tyne.

"But what have ye done with the bearing-bread,
And what have ye made of the washing-wine?
Or where have ye made your bearing-bed,
To bear a son in the sides of Tyne?"

"The bearing-bread is soft and new,
There is no soil in the straining wine;
The bed was made between green and blue,
It stands full soft by the sides of Tyne.

"The fair grass was my bearing-bread,
The well-water my washing-wine;
The low leaves were my bearing-bed,
And that was best in the sides of Tyne."

"O daughter, if ye have done this thing,
I wot the greater grief is mine;
This was a bitter child-bearing,
When ye were got by the sides of Tyne.

"About the time of the sea-swallows
That fly full thick by six and nine,
Ye'll have my body out of the house,
To bury me by the sides of Tyne.

"Set nine stones by the wall for twain,
Red rose leaves will never make wine;
For the bed I take will measure ten,
The ways are sair fra' the Till to the Tyne.

"Tread twelve girl's paces out for three,
Red rose leaves will never make wine;
For the pit I made has taken me,
The ways are sair fra' the Till to the Tyne."

THE YEAR OF LOVE.

THERE were four loves that one by one,
Following the seasons and the sun,
Passed over without tears, and fell
Away without farewell.

The first was made of gold and tears,
The next of aspen-leaves and fears,
The third of rose-boughs and rose-roots,
The last love of strange fruits.

These were the four loves faded. Hold
Some minutes fast the time of gold
When our lips each way clung and clove
To a face full of love.

The tears inside our eyelids met,
Wrung forth with kissing, and wept wet
The faces cleaving each to each
Where the blood served for speech.

The second, with low patient brows
Bound under aspen-colored boughs
And eyes made strong and grave with sleep
And yet too weak to weep ;

The third, with eager mouth at ease
Fed from late autumn honey, lees
Of scarce gold left in latter cells
With scattered flower-smells,—

Hair sprinkled over with spoilt sweet
Of ruined roses, wrists and feet
Slight-swathed, as grassy girdled sheaves
Hold in stray poppy-leaves ;

The fourth, with lips whereon has bled
Some great pale fruit's slow color, shed
From the rank bitter husk whence drips
Faint blood between her lips,—

Made of the heat of whole great Junes
Burning the blue dark round their moons
(Each like a mown red marigold),
So hard the flame keeps hold,—

These are burnt thoroughly away.
Only the first holds out a day
Beyond these latter loves that were
Made of mere heat and air.

And now the time is winterly
The first love fades too : none will see,
When April warms the world anew,
The place wherein love grew.

THE LAST ORACLE.

(A. D. 361.)

YEARS have risen and fallen in darkness or in twilight,
Ages waxed and waned that knew not thee nor thine,
White the world sought light by night and sought not thy light,
Since the sad last pilgrim left thy dark mid shrine.
Dark the shrine, and dumb the fount of song thence welling,
Save for words more sad than tears of blood, that said :
Tell the king, on earth has fallen the glorious dwelling,
And the water-springs that spake are quenched and dead.
Not a cell is left the god, no roof, no cover ;
In his hand the prophet laurel flowers no more.
And the great king's high sad heart, thy true last lover,
Felt thine answer pierce and cleave it to the core.
And he bowed down his hopeless head
In the drift of the wild world's tide,
And dying, *Thou hast conquered,* he said,
Galilæan : he said it, and died.

And the world that was thine and was ours
When the Graces took hands with the Hours
Grew cold as a winter wave
In the wind from a wide-mouthed grave,
As a gulf wide open to swallow
The light that the world held dear.
O father of all of us, Paian, Apollo,
Destroyer and healer, hear!

Age on age thy mouth was mute, thy face was hidden,
And the lips and eyes that loved thee blind and dumb;
Song forsook their tongues that held thy name forbidden,
Light their eyes that saw the strange god's kingdom come.
Fire for light and hell for heaven and psalms for pæans
Filled the clearest eyes and lips most sweet of song,
When for chant of Greeks the wail of Galilæans
Made the whole world moan with hymns of wrath and wrong.
Yea, not yet we see thee, father, as they saw thee,
They that worshipped when the world was theirs and thine,
They whose words had power by thine own power to draw thee
Down from heaven till earth seemed more than heaven divine.
For the shades are about us that hover
When darkness is half withdrawn,
And the skirts of the dead night cover
The face of the live new dawn.
For the past is not utterly past,
Though the word on its lips be the last,
And the time be gone by with its creed
When men were as beasts that bled,
As sheep or as swine that wallow,
In the shambles of faith and of fear.
O father of all of us, Paian, Apollo,
Destroyer and healer, hear!

Yet it may be, lord and father, could we know it,
We that love thee for our darkness shall have light
More than ever prophet hailed of old, or poet
Standing crowned and robed and sovereign in thy sight.
To the likeness of one God their dreams enthralled thee,
Who was greater than all gods that waned and grew;
Son of God the shining son of Time they called thee,
Who was older, O our father, than they knew.
For no thought of man made gods to love or honor
Ere the song within the silent soul began;
Nor might earth in dream or deed take heaven upon her
Till the word was clothed with speech by lips of man.
And the word and the life was thou,
The spirit of man and the breath;
And before then the gods that bow
Take life at thine hands and death.
For these are as ghosts that wane,
That are gone in an age or twain;
Harsh, merciful, passionate, pure,
They perish, but thou shalt endure;
Be their life as the swan's or the swallow,
They pass as the flight of a year.
O father of all of us, Paian, Apollo,
Destroyer and healer, hear!

Thou the word, the light, the life, the breath, the glory,
Strong to help and heal, to lighten and to slay,
Thine is all the song of man, the world's whole story;
Not of morning and of evening is thy day.
Old and younger gods are buried or begotten
From uprising to downsetting of thy sun,
Risen from eastward, fallen to westward and forgotten,
And their springs are many, but their end is one.

Divers births of godheads find one death appointed,
As the soul whence each was born makes room for each ;
God by god goes out, discrowned and disanointed,
But the soul stands fast that gave them shape and speech.
Is the sun yet cast out of heaven ?
Is the song yet cast out of man ?
Life that had song for its leaven
To quicken the blood that ran
Through the veins of the songless years
More bitter and cold than tears ;
Heaven that had thee for its one
Light, life, word, witness, O sun,—
Are they soundless and sightless and hollow,
Without eye, without speech, without ear ?
O father of all of us, Paian, Apollo,
Destroyer and healer, hear !

Time arose, and smote thee silent at his warning ;
Change and darkness fell on men that fell from thee ;
Dark thou satest, veiled with light, behind the morning,
Till the soul of man should lift up eyes and see.
Till the blind mute soul get speech again and eyesight,
Man may worship not the light of life within ;
In his sight the stars whose fires grow dark in thy sight
Shine as sunbeams on the night of death and sin.
Time again is risen with mightier word of warning,
Change hath blown again a blast of louder breath ;
Clothed with clouds and stars and dreams that melt in morning,
Lo, the gods that ruled by grace of sin and death !
They are conquered, they break, they are stricken,
Whose might made the whole world pale ;
They are dust that shall rise not or quicken
Though the world for their death's sake wail.
As a hound on a wild beast's trace,
So time has their godhead in chase ;

As wolves when the hunt makes head,
They are scattered, they fly, they are fled;
They are fled beyond hail, beyond hollo,
And the cry of the chase, and the cheer.
O father of all of us, Paian, Apollo,
Destroyer and healer, hear!

Day by day thy shadow shines in heaven beholden,
Even the sun, the shining shadow of thy face:
King, the ways of heaven before thy feet grow golden;
God, the soul of earth is kindled with thy grace.
In thy lips the speech of man whence gods were fashioned,
In thy soul the thought that makes them and unmakes;
By thy light and heat incarnate and impassioned,
Soul to soul of man gives light for light, and takes.
As they knew thy name of old time could we know it,
Healer called of sickness, slayer invoked of wrong,
Light of eyes that saw thy light, god, king, priest, poet,
Song should bring thee back to heal us with thy song.
For thy kingdom is past not away,
Nor thy power from the place thereof hurled:
Out of heaven they shall cast not the day,
They shall cast not out song from the world.
By the song and the light they give,
We know thy works that they live;
With the gift thou hast given us of speech
We praise, we adore, we beseech,
We arise at thy bidding, and follow,
We cry to thee, answer, appear,
O father of all of us, Paian, Apollo,
Destroyer and healer, hear!

IN THE BAY.

I.

Beyond the hollow sunset, ere a star
Take heart in heaven from eastward, while the west,
Fulfilled of watery resonance and rest,
Is as a port with clouds for harbor-bar
To fold the fleet in of the winds from far
That stir no plume now of the bland sea's breast;

II.

Above the soft sweep of the breathless bay
South-westward, far past flight of night and day,
Lower than the sunken sunset sinks, and higher
Than dawn can freak the front of heaven with fire,—
My thought with eyes and wings made wide makes way
To find the place of souls that I desire.

III.

If any place for any soul there be,
Disrobed and disentrammelled; if the might,
The fire and force that filled with ardent light
The souls whose shadow if half the light we see,
Survive, and be suppressed not of the night,—
This hour should show what all day hid from me.

IV.

Night knows not, neither is it shown to day,
By sunlight nor by starlight is it shown,
Nor to the full moon's eye nor footfall known,
Their world's untrodden and unkindled way;
Nor is the breath nor music of it blown
With sounds of winter or with winds of May.

V.

But here, where light and darkness reconciled
Hold earth between them as a weaning child
Between the balanced hands of death and birth,
Even as they held the new-born shape of earth

When first life trembled in her limbs and smiled,—
Here hope might think to find what hope were worth.

VI.

Past Hades, past Elysium, past the long,
Slow, smooth, strong lapse of Lethe; past the toil
Wherein all souls are taken as a spoil,
The Stygian web of waters,—if your song
Be quenched not, O our brethren, but be strong
As ere ye too shook off our temporal coil;

VII.

If yet these twain survive your worldly breath,
Joy trampling sorrow, life devouring death,
If perfect life possess your life all through,
And like your words your souls be deathless too,
To-night, of all whom night encompasseth,
My soul would commune with one soul of you.

VIII.

Above the sunset, might I see thine eyes
That were above the sun-dawn in our skies,
Son of the songs of morning,—thine that were
First lights to lighten that rekindling air
Wherethrough men saw the front of England rise,
And heard thine loudest of the lyre-notes there,—

IX.

If yet thy fire have not one spark the less,
O Titan, born of her a Titaness,
Across the sunrise and the sunset's mark
Send of thy lyre one sound, thy fire one spark,
To change this face of our unworthiness,
Across this hour dividing light from dark;

X.

To change this face of our chill time, that hears
No song like thine of all that crowd its ears,
Of all its lights that lighten all day long
Sees none like thy most fleet and fiery sphere's
Out-lightening Sirius,—in its twilight throng,
No thunder and no sunrise like thy song.

XI.

Hath not the sea-wind swept the sea-line bare
To pave with stainless fire, through stainless air,
A passage for thine heavenlier feet to tread
Ungrieved of earthly floor-work ? hath it spread
No covering splendid as the sun-god's hair
To veil or to reveal thy lordlier head ?

XII.

Hath not the sunset strewn across the sea
A way majestical enough for thee ?
What hour save this should be thine hour—and mine,
If thou have care of any less divine
Than thine own soul ; if thou take thought of me,
Marlowe, as all my soul takes thought of thine ?

XIII.

Before the moon's face as before the sun,
The morning star and evening star are one
For all men's lands as England. Oh, if night
Hang hard upon us,—ere our day take flight,
Shed thou some comfort from thy day long done
On us pale children of the latter light !

XIV.

For surely, brother and master, and lord and king,
Where'er thy footfall and thy face make spring
In all souls' eyes that meet thee wheresoe'er,
And have thy soul for sunshine and sweet air,—
Some late love of thine old live land should cling,
Some living love of England, round thee there.

XV.

Here from her shore, across her sunniest sea,
My soul makes question of the sun for thee,
And waves and beams make answer. When thy feet
Made her ways flowerier and their flowers more sweet
With childlike passage of a god to be,
Like spray these waves cast off her foemen's fleet.

XVI.

Like foam they flung it from her, and like weed
Its wrecks were washed from scornful shoal to shoal,
From rock to rock reverberate ; and the whole
Sea laughed and lightened with a deathless deed
That sowed our enemies in her field for seed,
And made her shores fit harborage for thy soul.

XVII.

Then in her green south fields, a poor man's child,
Thou hadst thy short sweet fill of half-blown joy,
That ripens all of us for time to cloy
With full-blown pain and passion, ere the wild
World caught thee by the fiery heart, and smiled
To make so swift end of the godlike boy.

XVIII.

For thou, if ever godlike foot there trod
These fields of ours, wert surely like a god.
Who knows what splendor of strange dreams was shed
With sacred shadow and glimmer of gold and red
From hallowed windows, over stone and sod,
On thine unbowed bright, insubmissive head ?

XIX.

The shadow stayed not, but the splendor stays,
Our brother, till the last of English days.
No day nor night on English earth shall be
Forever, spring nor summer, Junes nor Mays,
But somewhat as a sound or gleam of thee
Shall come on us like morning from the sea.

XX.

Like sunrise never wholly risen, nor yet
Quenched ; or like sunset never wholly set,
A light to lighten as from living eyes
The cold, unlit, close lids of one that lies
Dead, or a ray returned from death's far skies
To fire us living lest our lives forget.

XXI.

For in that heaven what light of lights may be,
What splendor of what stars, what spheres of flame
Sounding, that none may number nor may name,
We know not, even thy brethren ; yea, not we
Whose eyes desire the light that lightened thee,
Whose ways and thine are one way and the same.

XXII.

But if the riddles that in sleep we read,
And trust them not, be flattering truth indeed,
As he that rose our mightiest called them,—he,
Much higher than thou as thou much higher than we,—
There, might we say, all flower of all our seed,
All singing souls are as one sounding sea.

XXIII.

All those that here were of thy kind and kin
Beside thee and below thee, full of love,
Full-souled for song,—and one alone above
Whose only light folds all your glories in—
With all birds' notes from nightingale to dove
Fill the world whither we too fain would win ;

XXIV.

The world that sees in heaven the sovereign light
Of sunlike Shakespeare, and the fiery night
Whose stars were watched of Webster ; and beneath,
The twin-souled brethren of the single wreath,
Grown in king's gardens, plucked from pastoral heath,
Wrought with all flowers for all men's heart's delight.

XXV.

And that fixed fervor, iron-red like Mars,
In the mid moving tide of tenderer stars,
That burned on loves and deeds the darkest done,
Athwart the incestuous prisoner's bride-house bars ;
And thine, most highest of all their fires but one,
Our morning star, sole risen before the sun.

XXVI.

And one light risen since theirs to run such race
Thou hast seen, O Phosphor, from thy pride of place.
Thou hast seen Shelley, him that was to thee
As light to fire or dawn to lightning ; me,—
Me likewise, O our brother, shalt thou see,
And I behold thee, face to glorious face ?

XXVII.

You twain the same swift year of manhood swept
Down the steep darkness, and our father wept.
And from the gleam of Apollonian tears
A holier aureole rounds your memories, kept
Most fervent-fresh of all the singing spheres,
And April-colored through all months and years.

XXVIII.

You twain, fate spared not half your fiery span ;
The longer date fulfils the lesser man.
Ye from beyond the dark dividing date
Stand smiling, crowned as gods, with foot on fate.
For stronger was your blessing than his ban,
And earliest whom he struck, he struck too late.

XXIX.

Yet love and loathing, faith and unfaith yet
Bind less to greater souls in unison,
And one desire that makes three spirits as one
Takes great and small as in one spiritual net
Woven out of hope toward what shall yet be done
Ere hate or love remember or forget ;

XXX.

Woven out of faith and hope and love too great
To bear the bonds of life and death and fate ;
Woven out of love and hope and faith too dear
To take the print of doubt and change and fear ;
And interwoven with lines of wrath and hate
Blood-red with soils of many a sanguine year.

XXXI.

Who cannot hate, can love not: if he grieve,
His tears are barren as the unfruitful rain
That rears no harvest from the green sea's plain,
And as thorns crackling this man's laugh is vain.
Nor can belief touch, kindle, smite, reprieve
His heart who has not heart to disbelieve.

XXXII.

But you, most perfect in your hate and love,
Our great twin-spirited brethren; you that stand
Head by head glittering, hand made fast in hand,
And underfoot the fang-drawn worm that strove
To wound you living; from so far above,
Look love, not scorn, on ours that was your land.

XXXIII.

For love we lack, and help and heat and light
To clothe us and to comfort us with might.
What help is ours to take or give? but ye—
Oh, more than sunrise to the blind cold sea,
That wailed aloud with all her waves all night,
Much more, being much more glorious, should you be.

XXXIV.

As fire to frost, as ease to toil, as dew
To flowerless fields, as sleep to slackening pain,
As hope to souls long weaned from hope again
Returning, or as blood revived anew
To dry-drawn limbs and every pulseless vein,—
Even so toward us should no man be but you.

XXXV.

One rose before the sunrise was, and one
Before the sunset, lovelier than the sun.
And now the heaven is dark and bright and loud
With wind and starry drift and moon and cloud,
And night's cry rings in straining sheet and shroud:
What help is ours if hope like yours be none?

XXXVI.

O well-beloved, our brethren, if ye be,
Then are we not forsaken. This kind earth
Made fragrant once for all time with your birth,
And bright for all men with your love, and worth
The clasp and kiss and wedlock of the sea,
Were not your mother if not your brethren we.

XXXVII.

Because the days were dark with gods and kings,
And in time's hand the old hours of time as rods,
When force and fear set hope and faith at odds,
Ye failed not, nor abased your plume-plucked wings;
And we that front not more disastrous things,
How should we fail in face of kings and gods?

XXXVIII.

For now the deep dense plumes of night are thinned
Surely with winnowing of the glimmering wind
Whose feet are fledged with morning; and the
breath
Begins in heaven that sings the dark to death.
And all the night wherein men groaned and sinned
Sickens at heart to hear what sundawn saith.

XXXIX.

O first-born sons of hope and fairest! ye
Whose prows first clove the thought-unsounded sea
Whence all the dark dead centuries rose to bar
The spirit of man lest truth should make him free,
The sunrise and the sunset, seeing one star,
Take heart as we to know you that ye are.

XL.

Ye rise not, and ye set not: we that say
Ye rise and set like hopes that set and rise
Look yet but seaward from a land-locked bay;
But where at last the sea's line is the sky's,
And truth and hope one sunlight in your eyes,
No sunrise and no sunset marks their day.

A FORSAKEN GARDEN.

In a coign of the cliff between lowland and highland,
At the sea-down's edge between windward and lee,
Walled round with rocks as an inland island,
The ghost of a garden fronts the sea.
A girdle of brushwood and thorn encloses
The steep square slope of the blossomless bed
Where the weeds that grew green from the graves of its roses
Now lie dead.

The fields fall southward, abrupt and broken,
To the low last edge of the long lone land.
If a step should sound or a word be spoken,
Would a ghost not rise at the strange guest's hand?
So long have the gray bare walks lain guestless,
Through branches and briers if a man make way,
He shall find no life but the sea-wind's, restless
Night and day.

The dense hard passage is blind and stifled
That crawls by a track none turn to climb
To the strait waste place that the years have rifled
Of all but the thorns that are touched not of time.
The thorns he spares when the rose is taken;
The rocks are left when he wastes the plain;
The wind that wanders, the weeds wind-shaken,
These remain.

Not a flower to be prest of the foot that falls not;
As the heart of a dead man the seed-plots are dry;
From the thicket of thorns whence the nightingale calls not,
Could she call, there were never a rose to reply.
Over the meadows that blossom and wither,
Rings but the note of a sea-bird's song.
Only the sun and the rain come hither
All year long.

The sun burns sear, and the rain dishevels
One gaunt bleak blossom of scentless breath.

Only the wind here hovers and revels
In a round where life seems barren as death.
Here there was laughing of old, there was weeping,
Haply, of lovers none ever will know,
Whose eyes went seaward a hundred sleeping
Years ago.

Heart handfast in heart as they stood, "Look thither,"
Did he whisper? "Look forth from the flowers to the sea;
For the foam-flowers endure when the rose-blossoms wither,
And men that love lightly may die—But we?"
And the same wind sang, and the same waves whitened,
And or ever the garden's last petals were shed,
In the lips that had whispered, the eyes that had lightened,
Love was dead.

Or they loved their life through, and then went whither?
And were one to the end—but what end who knows?
Love deep as the sea as a rose must wither,
As the rose-red seaweed that mocks the rose.
Shall the dead take thought for the dead to love them?
What love was ever as deep as a grave?
They are loveless now as the grass above them
Or the wave.

All are at one now, roses and lovers,
Not known of the cliffs and the fields and the sea.
Not a breath of the time that has been hovers
In the air now soft with a summer to be.
Not a breath shall there sweeten the seasons hereafter
Of the flowers or the lovers that laugh now or weep,
When as they that are free now of weeping and laughter
We shall sleep.

Here death may deal not again forever ;
Here change may come not till all change end.
From the graves they have made they shall rise up never,
Who have left naught living to ravage and rend.
Earth, stones, and thorns of the wild ground growing,
While the sun and the rain live, these shall be ;
Till a last wind's breath, upon all these blowing,
Roll the sea.

Till the slow sea rise, and the sheer cliff crumble,
Till terrace and meadow the deep gulfs drink,
Till the strength of the waves of the high tides humble
The fields that lessen, the rocks that shrink,
Here now in his triumph where all things falter,
Stretched out on the spoils that his own hand spread,
As a god self-slain on his own strange altar,
Death lies dead.

RELICS.

This flower that smells of honey and the sea,
White laurustine, seems in my hand to be
A white star made of memory long ago
Lit in the heaven of dear times dead to me.

A star out of the skies, love used to know
Here held in hand, a stray left yet to show
What flowers my heart was full of in the days
That are long since gone down dead memory's flow.

Dead memory that revives on doubtful ways,
Half hearkening what the buried season says,
Out of the world of the unapparent dead
Where the lost Aprils are, and the lost Mays.

Flower, once I knew thy star-white brethren bred
Nigh where the last of all the land made head
Against the sea, a keen-faced promontory,—
Flowers on salt wind and sprinkled sea dews fed.

Their hearts were glad of the free place's glory ;
The wind that sang them all his stormy story
Had talked all winter to the sleepless spray,
And as the sea's their hues were hard and hoary.

Like things born of the sea and the bright day,
They laughed out at the years that could not slay,
Live sons and joyous of unquiet hours,
And stronger than all storms that range for prey.

And in the close indomitable flowers
A keen-edged odor of the sun and showers
Was as the smell of the fresh honeycomb
Made sweet for mouths of none but paramours.

Out of the hard green wall of leaves that clomb,
They showed like windfalls of the snow-soft foam,
Or feathers from the weary south-wind's wing,
Fair as the spray that it came shoreward from.

And thou, as white, what word hast thou to bring ?
If my heart hearken, whereof wilt thou sing ?
For some sign surely thou, too, hast to bear,
Some word far south was taught thee of the spring.

White like a white rose, not like these that were
Taught of the wind's mouth and the winter air,
Poor tender thing of soft Italian bloom,
Where once thou grewest, what else for me grew there ?

Born in what spring and on what city's tomb,
By whose hand wast thou reached, and plucked for whom ?
There hangs about thee, could the soul's sense tell,
An odor as of love and of love's doom.

Of days more sweet than thou was sweet to smell,
Of flower-soft thoughts that came to flower and fell,
Of loves that lived a lily's life and died,
Of dreams now dwelling where dead roses dwell.

O white birth of the golden mountain-side
That for the sun's love makes its bosom wide
  At sunrise, and with all its woods and flowers
Takes in the morning to its heart of pride !

Thou hast a word of that one land of ours,
And of the fair town called of the fair towers,
  A word for me of my San Gimignan,
A word of April's greenest-girdled hours ;

Of the breached walls whereon the wallflowers ran
Called of Saint Fina, breachless now of man,
  Though time with soft feet break them stone by
    stone,
Who breaks down hour by hour his own reign's span ;

Of the cliff overcome and overgrown
That all that flowerage clothed as flesh clothes bone,
  That garment of acacias made for May,
Whereof here lies one witness overblown.

The fair brave trees with all their flowers at play,
How king-like they stood up into the day !
  How sweet the day was with them, and the night !
Such words of message have dead flowers to say.

This that the winter and the wind made bright,
And this that lived upon Italian light,
  Before I throw them and these words away,
Who knows but I what memories too take flight ?

SESTIMA.

I saw my soul at rest upon a day
  As a bird sleeping in the nest of night,
Among soft leaves that give the starlight way
  To touch its wings but not its eyes with light ;
So that it knew as one in visions may,
  And knew not as men waking, of delight.

This was the measure of my soul's delight ;
  It had no power of joy to fly by day,

Nor part in the large lordship of the light;
  But in a secret, moon-beholden way
Had all its will of dreams and pleasant night,
  And all the love and light that sleepers may.

But such life's triumph as men waking may
  It might not have to feed its faint delight
Between the stars by night and sun by day,
  Shut up with green leaves and a little light;
Because its way was as a lost star's way,
  A world's not wholly known of day or night.

All loves and dreams and sounds and gleams of night
  Made it all music that such minstrels may,
And all they had they gave it of delight;
  But in the full face of the fire of day
What place shall be for any starry light,
  What part of heaven in all the wide sun's way?

Yet the soul woke not, sleeping by the way,
  Watched as a nursling of the large-eyed night,
And sought no strength nor knowledge of the day,
  Nor closer touch conclusive of delight,
Nor mightier joy nor truer than dreamers may,
  Nor more of song than they, nor more of light.

For who sleeps once, and sees the secret light
  Whereby sleep shows the soul a fairer way
Between the rise and rest of day and night,
  Shall care no more to fare as all men may,
But he his place of pain or of delight,
  There shall he dwell, beholding night as day.

Song, have thy day, and take thy fill of light
  Before the night be fallen across thy way;
Sing while he may, man hath no long delight.

A WASTED VIGIL.

I.

Couldst thou not watch with me one hour? Behold,
Dawn skims the sea with flying feet of gold,
With sudden feet that graze the gradual sea:
  Couldst thou not watch with me?

II.

What, not one hour ? For star by star the night
Falls, and her thousands world by world take flight;
They die, and day survives, and what of thee ?
Couldst thou not watch with me ?

III.

Lo, far in heaven the web of night undone,
And on the sudden sea the gradual sun ;
Wave to wave answers, tree responds to tree :
Couldst thou not watch with me ?

IV.

Sunbeam by sunbeam creeps from line to line,
Foam by foam quickens on the brightening brine ;
Sail by sail passes, flower by flower gets free :
Couldst thou not watch with me ?

V.

Last year, a brief while since, an age ago,
A whole year past, with bud and bloom and snow,
O moon that wast in heaven, what friends were we !
Couldst thou not watch with me ?

VI.

Old moons, and last year's flowers, and last year's snows,
Who now saith to thee, moon ? or who saith, rose ?
O dust and ashes, once found fair to see !
Couldst thou not watch with me ?

VII.

O dust and ashes, once thought sweet to smell !
With me it is not, is it with thee, well ?
O sea-drift blown from windward back to lee !
Couldst thou not watch with me ?

VIII.

The old year's dead hands are full of their dead
flowers,
The old days are full of dead old loves of ours,
Born as a rose, and briefer born than she:
Couldst thou not watch with me?

IX.

Could two days live again of that dead year,
One would say, seeking us and passing here,
Where is she? and one answering, *Where is he?*
Couldst thou not watch with me?

X.

Nay, those two lovers are not anywhere;
If we were they, none knows us what we were,
Nor aught of all their barren grief and glee:
Couldst thou not watch with me?

XI.

Half false, half fair, all feeble, be my verse
Upon thee not for blessing nor for curse,
For some must stand, and some must fall or flee:
Couldst thou not watch with me?

XII.

As a new moon above spent stars thou wast;
But stars endure after the moon is past,
Couldst thou not watch one hour, though I watch
three?
Couldst thou not watch with me?

XIII.

What of the night? The night is full, the tide
Storms inland, the most ancient rocks divide;
Yet some endure, and bow nor head nor knee:
Couldst thou not watch with me?

XIV.

Since thou art not as these are, go thy ways;
Thou hast no part in all my nights and days.
Lie still, sleep on, be glad—as such things be:
Thou couldst not watch with me.

THE COMPLAINT OF LISA.

(*Double Sestina*).

DECAMERON, X. 7.

THERE is no woman living that draws breath
So sad as I, though all things sadden her.
There is not one upon life's weariest way
Who is weary as I am weary of all but death.
Toward whom I look as looks the sunflower
All day with all his whole soul toward the sun;
While in the sun's sight I make moan all day,
And all night on my sleepless maiden bed

Weep and call out on death, O Love, and thee,
That thou or he would take me to the dead.
And know not what thing evil I have done
That life should lay such heavy hand on me.
Alas! Love, what is this thou wouldst with me?
What honor shalt thou have to quench my breath,
Or what shall my heart broken profit thee?
O Love, O great god Love, what have I done,
That thou shouldst hunger so after my death?
My heart is harmless as my life's first day:
Seek out some false fair woman, and plague her
Till her tears even as my tears fill her bed:
I am the least flower in thy flowery way,
But till my time be come that I be dead,
Let me live out my flower-time in the sun,
Though my leaves shut before the sunflower.

O Love, Love, Love, the kingly sunflower!
Shall he the sun hath looked on look on me,
That live down here in shade, out of the sun,
Here living in the sorrow and shadow of death?

Shall he that feeds his heart full of the day
Care to give mine eyes light, or my lips breath?
Because she loves him, shall my lord love her
Who is as a worm in my lord's kingly way?
I shall not see him or know him alive or dead;
But thou, I know thee, O Love, and pray to thee
That in brief while my brief life-days be done,
And the worm quickly make my marriage-bed.

For underground there is no sleepless bed.
But here since I beheld my sunflower
These eyes have slept not, seeing all night and day
His sunlike eyes, and face fronting the sun.
Wherefore, if anywhere be any death,
I would fain find and fold him fast to me,
That I may sleep with the world's eldest dead,
With her that died seven centuries since, and her
That went last night down the night-wandering way.
For this is sleep indeed, when labor is done,
Without love, without dreams, and without breath,
And without thought, O name unnamed! of thee.

Ah! but, forgetting all things, shall I thee?
Wilt thou not be as now about my bed
There underground as here before the sun?
Shall not thy vision vex me alive and dead,
Thy moving vision without form or breath?
I read long since the bitter tale of her
Who read the tale of Launcelot on a day,
And died, and had no quiet after death,
But was moved ever along a weary way,
Lost with her love in the underworld; ah me,
O my king, O my lordly sunflower,
Would God to me, too, such a thing were done!

But if such sweet and bitter things be done,
Then, flying from life, I shall not fly from thee.
For in that living world without a sun
Thy vision will lay hold upon me dead,
And meet and mock me, and mar my peace in death.
Yet if being wroth, God had such pity on her,
Who was a sinner and foolish in her day,

That even in hell they twain should breathe one
breath,
Why should he not in some wise pity me?
So if I sleep not in my soft strait bed,
I may look up and see my sunflower
As he the sun, in some divine strange way.

O poor my heart, well knowest thou in what way
This sore sweet evil unto us was done.
For on a holy and a heavy day
I was arisen out of my still small bed
To see the knights tilt, and one said to me
"The king;" and seeing him, somewhat stopped
my breath;
And if the girl spake more, I heard not her,
For only I saw what I shall see when dead,
A kingly flower of knights, a sunflower,
That shone against the sunlight like the sun,
And like a fire, O heart, consuming thee,
The fire of love that lights the pyre of death.

Howbeit I shall not die an evil death
Who have loved in such a sad and sinless way,
That this my love, lord, was no shame to thee.
So when mine eyes are shut against the sun,
O my soul's sun, O the world's sunflower,
Thou nor no man will quite despise me dead.
And dying I pray with all my low last breath
That thy whole life may be as was that day,
That feast-day that made trothplight death and me,
Giving the world light of thy great deeds done;
And that fair face brightening thy bridal bed,
That God be good as God hath been to her.

That all things goodly and glad remain with her,
All things that make glad life and goodly death;
That as a bee sucks from a sunflower
Honey, when summer draws delighted breath,
Her soul may drink of thy soul in like way,
And love make life a fruitful marriage-bed
Where day may bring forth fruits of joy to day
And night to night till days and nights be dead.

And as she gives light of her love to thee,
Give thou to her the old glory of days long done;
And either give some heat of light to me.
To warm me where I sleep without the sun.

O sunflower made drunken with the sun,
O knight whose lady's heart draws thine to her,
Great king, glad lover, I have a word to thee.
There is a weed lives out of the sun's way,
Hid from the heat deep in the meadow's bed,
That swoons and whitens at the wind's least breath,
A flower star-shaped, that all a summer day
Will gaze her soul out on the sunflower
For very love till twilight finds her dead.
But the great sunflower heeds not her poor death,
Knows not when all her loving life is done;
And so much knows my lord the king of me.

Ay, all day long he has no eye for me;
With golden eye following the golden sun
From rose-colored to purple-pillowed bed,
From birthplace to the flame-lit place of death,
From eastern end to western of his way,
So mine eye follows thee, my sunflower,
So the white star-flower turns and yearns to thee,
The sick weak weed, not well alive or dead,
Trod under foot if any pass by her,
Pale, without color of summer or summer breath
In the shrunk shuddering petals, that have done
No work but love, and die before the day.

But thou, to-day, to-morrow, and every day,
Be glad and great, O love whose love slays me.
Thy fervent flower made fruitful from the sun
Shall drop its golden seed in the world's way,
That all men thereof nourished shall praise thee
For grain and flower and fruit of works well done;
Till thy shed seed, O shining sunflower,
Bring forth such growth of the world's garden-bed
As like the sun shall outlive age and death.
And yet I would thine heart had heed of her
Who loves thee alive; but not till she be dead.
Come, Love, then, quickly, and take her utmost
breath.

Song, speak for me who am dumb as are the dead;
From my sad bed of tears I send forth thee,
To fly all day from sun's birth to sun's death
Down the sun's way after the flying sun,
For love of her that gave thee wings and breath
Ere day be done, to seek the sunflower.

FOR THE FEAST OF GIORDANO BRUNO,

PHILOSOPHER AND MARTYR.

I.

Son of the lightning and the light that glows
  Beyond the lightning's or the morning's light,
  Soul splendid with all-righteous love of right,
In whose keen fire all hopes and fears and woes
Were clean consumed, and from their ashes rose
  Transfigured, and intolerable to sight
  Save of purged eyes whose lids had cast off night,
In love's and wisdom's likeness when they close,
Embracing, and between them truth stands fast,
  Embraced of either; thou whose feet were set
  On English earth while this was England yet,
Our friend that art, our Sidney's friend that wast,
Heart hardier found and higher than all men's past,
  Shall we not praise thee though thine own forget?

II.

Lift up thy light on us and on thine own,
  O soul whose spirit on earth was as a rod
  To scourge off priests, a sword to pierce their God,
A staff for man's free thought to walk alone,
A lamp to lead him far from shrine and throne
  On ways untrodden where his fathers trod
  Ere earth's heart withered at a high priest's nod,
And all men's mouths that made not prayer made moan.
From bonds and torments and the ravening flame,
  Surely thy spirit of sense rose up to greet
  Lucretius, where such only spirits meet,
And walk with him apart till Shelley came
  To make the heaven of heavens more heavenly sweet,
And mix with yours a third incorporate name.

AVE ATQUE VALE.

IN MEMORY OF CHARLES BAUDELAIRE.

Nous devions pourtant lui porter quelques fleurs;
Les morts, les pauvres morts, ont de grandes douleurs,
Et quand Octobre souffle, émondeur des vieux arbres,
Son vent melancholique à l'entour de leurs marbres,
Certe, ils doivent trouver les vivants bien ingrats.
Les Fleurs du Mal.

I.

Shall I strew on thee rose or rue or laurel,
Brother, on this that was the veil of thee?
Or quiet sea-flower moulded by the sea,
Or simplest growth of meadow-sweet or sorrel,
Such as the summer-sleepy dryads weave,
Waked up by snow-soft sudden rains at eve?
Or wilt thou rather as on earth before,
Half-faded fiery blossoms, pale with heat
And full of bitter summer, but more sweet
To thee than gleanings of a northern shore
Trod by no tropic feet?

II.

For always thee the fervid languid glories
Allured of heavier suns in mightier skies;
Thine ears knew all the wandering watery sighs
Where the sea sobs round Lesbian promontories,
The barren kiss of piteous wave to wave
That knows not where is that Leucadian grave
Which hides too deep the supreme head of song.
Ah! salt and sterile as her kisses were,
The wild sea winds her and the green gulfs bear
Hither and thither, and vex and work her wrong,
Blind gods that cannot spare.

III.

Thou sawest, in thine old singing season, brother,
Secrets and sorrows unbeheld of us:
Fierce loves, and lovely leaf-buds poisonous,
Bare to thy subtler eye, but for none other
Blowing by night in some unbreathed-in clime;
The hidden harvest of luxurious time,

Sin without shape, and pleasure without speech;
And where strange dreams in a tumultuous sleep
Make the shut eyes of stricken spirits weep;
And with each face thou sawest the shadow on each,
Seeing as men sow men reap.

IV.

O sleepless heart and sombre soul unsleeping,
That were athirst for sleep and no more life
And no more love, for peace and no more strife!
Now the dim gods of death have in their keeping
Spirit and body and all the springs of song,
Is it well now where love can do no wrong,
Where stingless pleasure has no foam or fang
Behind the unopening closure of her lips?
Is it not well where soul from body slips,
And flesh from bone divides without a pang
As dew from flower-bell drips?

V.

It is enough: the end and the beginning
Are one thing to thee, who art past the end.
O hand unclasped of unbeholden friend!
For thee no fruits to pluck, no palms for winning,
No triumph and no labor and no lust,
Only dead yew-leaves and a little dust.
O quiet eyes wherein the light saith naught,
Whereto the day is dumb, nor any night
With obscure finger silences your sight,
Not in your speech the sudden soul speaks thought,
Sleep, and have sleep for light.

VI.

Now all strange hours and all strange loves are over,
Dreams and desires and sombre songs and sweet,
Hast thou found place at the great knees and feet
Of some pale Titan-woman like a lover,
Such as thy vision here solicited,
Under the shadow of her fair vast head,
The deep division of prodigious breasts,
The solemn slope of mighty limbs asleep,
The weight of awful tresses that still keep
The savor and shade of old-world pine-forests
Where the wet hill-winds weep?

VII.

Hast thou found any likeness for thy vision ?
O gardener of strange flowers, what bud, what bloom,
Hast thou found sown, what gathered in the gloom ?
What of despair, of rapture, of derision,
What of life is there, what of ill or good ?
Are the fruits gray like dust, or bright like blood ?
Does the dim ground grow any seed of ours,
The faint fields quicken any terrene root,
In low lands where the sun and moon are mute,
And all the stars keep silence ? Are there flowers
At all, or any fruit ?

VIII.

Alas ! but though my flying song flies after,
O sweet strange elder singer, thy more fleet
Singing, and footprints of thy fleeter feet,
Some dim derision of mysterious laughter
From the blind tongueless warders of the dead,
Some gainless glimpse of Proserpine's veiled head,
Some little sound of unregarded tears
Wept by effaced unprofitable eyes,
And from pale mouths some cadence of dead sighs,—
These, only these, the hearkening spirit hears,
Sees only such things rise.

IX.

Thou art far too far for wings of words to follow,
Far too far off for thought or any prayer.
What ails us with thee, who art wind and air ?
What ails us gazing where all seen is hollow ?
Yet with some fancy, yet with some desire,
Dreams pursue death as winds a flying fire,
Our dreams pursue our dead, and do not find.
Still, and more swift than they, the thin flame flies,
The low light fails us in elusive skies,
Still the foiled earnest ear is deaf, and blind
Are still the eluded eyes.

X.

Not thee, oh! never thee, in all time's changes,
Not thee, but this the sound of thy sad soul,
The shadow of thy swift spirit, this shut scroll
I lay my hand on, and not death estranges
My spirit from communion of thy song;
These memories and these melodies that throng
Veiled porches of a Muse funereal,—
These I salute, these touch, these clasp and fold
As though a hand were in my hand to hold,
Or through mine ears a mourning musical
Of many mourners rolled.

XI.

I among these, I also, in such station
As when the pyre was charred, and piled the sods,
And offering to the dead made, and their gods,
The old mourners had, standing to make libation,
I stand, and to the gods and to the dead
Do reverence without prayer or praise, and shed
Offering to these unknown, the gods of gloom,
And what of honey and spice my seed-lands bear,
And what I may of fruits in this chilled air,
And lay, Orestes-like, across the tomb
A curl of severed hair.

XII.

But by no hand nor any treason stricken,
Not like the low-lying head of Him, the king,
The flame that made of Troy a ruinous thing,
Thou liest, and on this dust no tears could quicken
There fall no tears like theirs that all men hear
Fall tear by sweet imperishable tear
Down the opening leaves of holy poets' pages.
Thee not Orestes, not Electra, mourns;
But bending us-ward with memorial urns
The most high Muses that fulfil all ages
Weep, and our God's heart yearns.

XIII.

For, sparing of his sacred strength, not often
Among us darkling here the lord of light
Makes manifest his music and his might
In hearts that open and in lips that soften
With the soft flame and heat of songs that shine.
Thy lips indeed he touched with bitter wine,
And nourished them indeed with bitter bread;
Yet surely from his hand thy soul's food came,
The fire that scarred thy spirit at his flame
Was lighted, and thine hungering heart he fed
Who feeds our hearts with fame.

XIV.

Therefore he too now at thy soul's sunsetting,
God of all suns and songs, he too bends down
To mix his laurel with thy cypress crown,
And save thy dust from blame and from forgetting.
Therefore he too, seeing all thou wert and art,
Compassionate, with sad and sacred heart,
Mourns thee of many his children the last dead,
And hallows with strange tears and alien sighs
Thine unmelodious mouth and sunless eyes,
And over thine irrevocable head
Sheds light from the under skies.

XV.

And one weeps with him in the ways Lethean,
And stains with tears her changing bosom chill;
That obscure Venus of the hollow hill,
That thing transformed which was the Cytherean,
With lips that lost their Grecian laugh divine
Long since, and face no more called Erycine
A ghost, a bitter and luxurious god.
Thee also with fair flesh and singing spell
Did she, a sad and second prey, compel
Into the footless places once more trod,
And shadows hot from hell.

XVI.

And now no sacred staff shall break in blossom,
No choral salutation lure to light
A spirit sick with perfume and sweet night
And love's tired eyes and hands and barren bosom.
There is no help for these things ; none to mend,
And none to mar ; not all our songs, O friend !
Will make death clear, or make life durable.
Howbeit with rose and ivy and wild vine
And with wild notes about this dust of thine
At least I fill the place where white dreams dwell,
And wreathe an unseen shrine.

XVII.

Sleep ; and if life was bitter to thee, pardon,
If sweet, give thanks ; thou hast no more to live ;
And to give thanks is good, and to forgive.
Out of the mystic and the mournful garden
Where all day through thine hands in barren braid
Wove the sick flowers of secrecy and shade,
Green buds of sorrow and sin, and remnants gray,
Sweet-smelling, pale with poison, sanguine-hearted,
Passions that sprang from sleep and thoughts that started,
Shall death not bring us all as thee one day
Among the days departed ?

XVIII.

For thee, oh, now a silent soul, my brother,
Take at my hands this garland, and farewell
Thin is the leaf, and chill the wintry smell,
And chill the solemn earth, a fatal mother,
With sadder than the Niobean womb,
And in the hollow of her breasts a tomb.
Content thee, howsoe'er, whose days are done :
There lies not any troublous thing before,
Nor sight nor sound to war against thee more,
For whom all winds are quiet as the sun,
All waters as the shore.

MEMORIAL VERSES

ON THE DEATH OF THÉOPHILE GAUTIER.

DEATH, what hast thou to do with me? So saith
Love, with eyes set against the face of Death;
What have I done, O thou strong Death, to thee,
That mine own lips should wither from thy breath?

Though thou be blind as fire or as the sea,
Why should thy waves and storms make war on me?
Is it for hate thou hast to find me fair,
Or for desire to kiss, if it might be,—

My very mouth of song, and kill me there?
So with keen rains vexing his crownless hair,
With bright feet bruised from no delightful way,
Through darkness and the disenchanted air,—

Lost Love went weeping half a winter's day.
And the armed wind that smote him seemed to say,
How shall the dew live when the dawn is fled,
Or wherefore should the Mayflower outlast May?

Then Death took Love by the right hand, and said,
Smiling, Come now, and look upon thy dead.
But Love cast down the glories of his eyes,
And bowed down like a flower his flowerless head.

And Death spake, saying, What ails thee in such wise,
Being god, to shut thy sight up from the skies?
If thou canst see not, hast thou ears to hear?
Or is thy soul too as a leaf that dies?

Even as he spake with fleshless lips of fear,
But soft as sleep sings in a tired man's ear,
Behold, the winter was not, and its might
Fell, and fruits broke forth of the barren year.

And upon earth was largess of great light,
And moving music winged for world-wide flight,
  And shapes and sounds of gods beheld and heard,
And day's foot set upon the neck of night.

And with such song the hollow ways were stirred
As of a god's heart hidden in a bird,
  Or as the whole soul of the sun in spring
Should find full utterance in one flower-soft word,—

And all the season should break forth and sing
From one flower's lips, in one rose triumphing;
  Such breath and light of song as of a flame
Made ears and spirits of them that heard it ring.

And Love beholding knew not for the same
The shape that led him, nor in face nor name;
  For he was bright, and great of thews, and fair,
And in Love's eyes he was not Death, but Fame.

Not that gray ghost whose life is empty and bare,
And his limbs moulded out of mortal air,
  A cloud of change that shifts into a shower,
And dies, and leaves no light for time to wear;

But a god clothed with his own joy and power,
A god re-risen out of his mortal hour
  Immortal, king and lord of time and space,
With eyes that look on them as from a tower.

And where he stood the pale sepulchral place
Bloomed, as new life might in a bloodless face,
  And where men sorrowing came to seek a tomb
With funeral flowers and tears for grief and grace,—

They saw with light as of a world in bloom
The portal of the House of Fame illume
  The ways of life wherein we toiling tread,
And watched the darkness as a brand consume.

And through the gates where rule the deathless dead
The sound of a new singer's soul was shed
  That sang among his kinsfolk, and a beam
Shot from the star on a new ruler's head;

A new star lightening the Lethean stream,
A new song mixed into the song supreme
  Made of all souls of singers and their might,
That makes of life and time and death a dream:

Thy star, thy song, O soul that in our sight
Wast as a sun that made for man's delight
  Flowers and all fruits in season, being so near
The sun-god's face, our god that gives us light.

To him, of all gods that we love or fear,
Thou among all men by thy name wast dear,—
  Dear to the god that gives us spirit of song
To bind and burn all hearts of men that hear;

The god that makes men's words too sweet and strong
For life or time or death to do them wrong,
  Who sealed with his thy spirit for a sign,
And filled it with his breath thy whole life long;

Who made thy moist lips fiery with new wine
Pressed from the grapes of song the sovereign vine,
  And with all love of all things loveliest
Gave thy soul power to make them more divine,—

That thou might'st breathe upon the breathless rest
Of marble, till the brows and lips and breast
  Felt fall from off them as a cancelled curse
That speechless sleep wherewith they lived opprest;

Who gave thee strength and heat of spirit to pierce
All clouds of form and color that disperse,
  And leave the spirit of beauty to re-mould
In types of clean chryselephantine verse;

Who gave thee words more golden than fine gold
To carve in shapes more glorious than of old,
  And build thy songs up in the sight of time
As statues set in godhead manifold,—

In sight and scorn of temporal change and clime
That meet the sun re-risen with refluent rhyme—
  As god to god might answer face to face—
From lips whereon the morning strikes sublime.

Dear to the god, our god who gave thee place
Among the chosen of days, the royal race,
The lords of light, whose eyes of old and ears
Saw even on earth and heard him for a space.

There are the souls of those once mortal years
That wrought with fire of joy and light of tears,
In words divine as deeds that grew thereof,
Such music as he swoons with love who hears.

There are the lives that enlighten from above
Our under lives, the spheral souls that move
Through the ancient heaven of song-illumined air,
Whence we that hear them singing die with love.

There all the crowned Hellenic heads, and there
The old gods who made men godlike as they were,
The lyric lips wherefrom all songs take fire,
Live eyes, and light of Apollonian hair.

There, round the sovereign passion of that lyre
Which the stars hear, and tremble with desire,
The ninefold light Pierian is made one
That here we see divided, and aspire,—

Seeing, after this or that crown to be won ;
But where they hear the singing of the sun,
All form, all sound, all color, and all thought
Are as one body and soul in unison.

There the song sung shines as a picture wrought,
The painted mouths sing that on earth say naught,
The carven limbs have sense of blood and growth,
And large-eyed life that seeks nor lacks not aught.

There all the music of thy living mouth
Lives, and all loves wrought of thine hand in youth,
And bound about the breasts and brows with gold,
And colored pale or dusk from north or south.

Fair living things made to thy will of old,
Born of thy lips, no births of mortal mould,
That in the world of song about thee wait
Where thought and truth are one and manifold.

Within the graven lintels of the gate
That here divides our vision and our fate,
The dreams we walk in and the truths of sleep,
All sense and spirit have life inseparate.

There, what one thinks, is his to grasp and keep;
There are no dreams, but very joys to reap;
No foiled desires that die before delight,
No fears to see across our joys, and weep.

There hast thou all thy will of thought and sight,
All hope for harvest, and all heaven for flight;
The sun rise of whose golden-mouthed glad head
The paler songless ghosts was heat and light.

Here, where the sunset of our year is red,
Men think of thee as of the summer dead,
Gone forth before the snows, before thy day,
With unshod feet, with brows unchapleted.

Couldst thou not wait till age had wound, they say,
Round those wreathed brows his soft white blossoms?
Nay,
Why shouldst thou vex thy soul with this harsh air,—
Thy bright-winged soul, once free to take its way?

Nor for men's reverence hadst thou need to wear
The holy flowers of gray time-hallowed hair;
Nor were it fit that aught of thee grew old,
Fair lover all thy days of all things fair.

And hear we not thy words of molten gold
Singing? or is their light and heat a-cold
Whereat men warmed their spirits? Nay, for all
These yet are with us, ours to hear and hold.

The lovely laughter, the clear tears, the call
Of love to love on ways where shadows fall,
Through doors of dim divisions and disguise,
And music made of doubts unmusical;

The love that caught strange light from death's own eyes,[1]
And filled death's lips with fiery words and sighs,
And half asleep let feed from veins of his
Her close red warm snake's mouth, Egyptian-wise :

And that great night of love more strange than this,[2]
When she that made the whole world's bale and bliss
Made king of the whole world's desire a slave,
And killed him in mid kingdom with a kiss ;

Veiled loves that shifted shapes and shafts, and gave,[3]
Laughing, strange gifts to hands that durst not crave,
Flowers doubled-blossomed, fruits of scent and hue
Sweet as the bride-bed, stranger than the grave ;

All joys and wonders of old lives and new
That ever in love's shine or shadow grew,
And all the grief whereof he dreams and grieves,
And all sweet roots fed on his light and dew ;

All these through thee our spirit of sense perceives,
As threads in the unseen woof thy music weaves,
Birds caught and snared that fill our ears with thee,
Bay-blossoms in thy wreath of brow-bound leaves.

Mixed with the masque of death's old comedy
Though thou too pass, have here our flowers, that we
For all the flowers thou gav'st upon thee shed,
And pass not crownless to Persephone.

Blue lotus-blooms and white and rosy-red
We wind with poppies for thy silent head,
And on this margin of the sundering sea
Leave thy sweet light to rise upon the dead.

[1] La Morte Amoureuse.
[2] Une Nuit Cléopâtre.
[3] Mademoiselle de Maupin.

AGE AND SONG.

(TO BARRY CORNWALL.)

I.

In vain men tell us time can alter
Old loves, or make old memories falter ;
That with the old year the old year's life closes.
The old dew still falls on the old sweet flowers,
The old sun revives the new-fledged hours,
The old summer rears the new-born roses.

II.

Much more a Muse that bears upon her
Raiment and wreath and flower of honor,
Gathered long since and long since woven,
Fades not or falls as fall the vernal
Blossoms that bear no fruit eternal,
By summer or winter charred or cloven.

III.

No time casts down, no time upraises,
Such loves, such memories, and such praises,
As need no grace of sun or shower,
No saving screen from frost or thunder,
To tend and house around and under
The imperishable and fearless flower.

IV.

Old thanks, old thoughts, old aspirations,
Outlive men's lives and lives of nations,
Dead, but for one thing which survives—
The inalienable and unpriced treasure,
The old joy of power, the old pride of pleasure,
That lives in light above men's lives.

IN MEMORY OF BARRY CORNWALL.

(Oct. 4, 1874.)

I.

In the garden of death, where the singers whose names are deathless
One with another make music unheard of men,
Where the dead sweet roses fade not of lips long breathless,
And the fair eyes shine that shall weep not or change again,
Who comes now crowned with the blossom of snow-white years?
What music is this that the world of the dead men hears?

II.

Beloved of men, whose words on our lips were honey,
Whose name in our ears and our fathers' ears was sweet,
Like summer gone forth of the land his songs made sunny,
To the beautiful veiled bright world where the glad ghosts meet,
Child, father, bridegroom and bride, and anguish and rest,
No soul shall pass of a singer than this more blest.

III.

Blest for the years' sweet sake that were filled and brightened,
As a forest with birds, with the fruit and the flower of his song;
For the souls' sake blest that heard, and their cares were lightened,
For the heart's sake blest that have fostered his name so long;

By the living and dead lips blest that have loved his name,
And clothed with their praise and crowned with their love for fame.

IV.

Ah, fair and fragrant his fame as flowers that close not,
That shrink not by day for heat or for cold by night,
As a thought in the heart shall increase when the heart's self knows not,
Shall endure in our ears as a sound, in our eyes as a light;
Shall wax with the years that wane and the seasons' chime,
As a white rose thornless that grows in the garden of time.

V.

The same year calls, and one goes hence with another,
And men sit sad that were glad for their sweet songs' sake;
The same year beckons, and elder with younger brother
Takes mutely the cup from his hand that we all shall take.[1]
They pass ere the leaves be past or the snows be come;
And the birds are loud, but the lips that outsang them dumb.

VI.

Time takes them home that we loved, fair names and famous,
To the soft long sleep, to the broad sweet bosom of death;
But the flower of their souls he shall take not away to shame us,

[1] Sydney Dobell died Aug. 22, 1874.

Nor the lips lack song forever that now lack
breath.
For with us shall the music and perfume that die
not dwell,
Though the dead to our dead bid welcome, and we
farewell.

EPICEDE.

(James Lorimer Graham died at Florence, April 30, 1876.)

Life may give for love to death
Little: what are life's gifts worth
To the dead wrapt round with earth?
Yet from lips of living breath
Sighs or words we are fain to give,
All that yet, while yet we live,
Life may give for love to death.

Dead so long before his day,
Passed out of the Italian sun
To the dark where all is done
Fallen upon the verge of May;
Here at life's and April's end
How should song salute my friend
Dead so long before his day?

Not a kindlier life or sweeter,
Time, that lights and quenches men,
Now may quench or light again;
Mingling with the mystic metre
Woven of all men's lives with his,
Not a clearer note than this,
Not a kindlier life or sweeter.

In this heavenliest part of earth
He that living loved the light,
Light and song, may rest aright,
One in death, if strange in birth,
With the deathless dead that make
Life the lovelier for their sake
In this heavenliest part of earth.

Light, and song, and sleep at last,—
  Struggling hands and suppliant knees
  Get no goodlier gift than these.
Song that holds remembrance fast,
  Light that lightens death, attend
  Round their graves who have to friend
Light, and song, and sleep at last.

INFERIÆ.

Spring, and the light and sound of things on earth
Re-quickening, all within our green sea's girth;
A time of passage or a time of birth
  Fourscore years since as this year, first and last.

The sun is all about the world we see,
The breath and strength of very spring; and we
Live, love, and feed on our own hearts: but he
  Whose heart fed mine has passed into the past.

Past, all things born with sense and blood and breath;
The flesh hears naught that now the spirit saith.
If death be like as birth, and birth as death,
  The first was fair—more fair should be the last.

Fourscore years since, and come but one month more,
The count were perfect of his mortal score
Whose sail went seaward yesterday from shore
  To cross the last of many an unsailed sea.

Light, love, and labor up to life's last height,—
These three were stars unsetting in his sight,
Even as the sun is life and heat and light,
  And sets not nor is dark when dark are we.

The life, the spirit, and the work were one
That here—ah! who shall say, that here are done?
Not I, that know not; father, not thy son,
  For all the darkness of the night and sea.

March 5, 1877.

A BIRTH-SONG.

(For Olivia Frances Madox Rossetti, born Sept. 20, 1875.)

Out of the dark sweet sleep
Where no dreams laugh or weep,
Borne through bright gates of birth
Into the dim sweet light
Where day still dreams of night
While heaven takes form on earth,
White rose of spirit and flesh, red lily of love,
What note of song have we
Fit for the birds and thee,
Fair nestling couched beneath the mother-dove?

Nay, in some more divine
Small speechless song of thine
Some news too good for words,
Heart-hushed and smiling, we
Might hope to have of thee,
The youngest of God's birds,
If thy sweet sense might mix itself with ours,
If ours might understand
The language of thy land,
Ere thine become the tongue of mortal hours:

Ere thy lips learn too soon
Their soft first human tune,
Sweet, but less sweet than now,
And thy raised eyes to read
Glad and good things indeed,
But none so sweet as thou:
Ere thought lift up their flower-soft lids to see
What life and love on earth
Bring thee for gifts at birth,
But none so good as thine who hast given us thee:

Now, ere thy sense forget
The heaven that fills it yet,
Now, sleeping or awake,
If thou couldst tell, or we
Ask and be heard of thee,
For love's undying sake,

From thy dumb lips divine and bright mute speech
Such dews might touch our ear
That then would burn to hear
Too high a message now for man's to reach.

Ere the gold hair of corn
Had withered wast thou born,
To make the good time glad ;
The time that but last year
Fell colder than a tear
On hearts and hopes turned sad.
High hopes and hearts requickening in thy dawn,
Even theirs whose life-springs, child,
Filled thine with life and smiled,
But then wept blood for half their own withdrawn.[1]

If death and birth be one,
And set with rise of sun,
And truth with dreams divine,
Some word might come with thee
From over the still sea
Deep hid in shade or shine,
Crossed by the crossing sails of death and birth,
Word of some sweet new thing
Fit for such lips to bring,
Some word of love, some afterthought of earth.

If love be strong as death,
By what so natural breath
As thine could this be said ?
By what so lovely way
Could love send word to say
He lives and is not dead ?
Such word alone were fit for only thee,
If his and thine have met
Where spirits rise and set,
His whom we see not, thine whom scarce we see :

His there new-born, as thou
New-born among us now ;
His, here so fruitful-souled,

[1] Oliver Madox Brown died Nov. 5, 1874, in his twentieth year.

Now veiled and silent here,
Now dumb as thou last year,
A ghost of one year old :
If lights that change their sphere in changing meet,
Some raymight his not give
To thine who wast to live,
And make thy present with his past life sweet ?

Let dreams that laugh or weep,
All glad and sad dreams, sleep ;
Truth more than dreams is dear,
Let thoughts that change and fly,
Sweet thoughts and swift, go by ;
More than all thought is here.
More than all hope can forge, or memory feign,
The life that in our eyes,
Made out of love's life, lies,
And flower-like fed with love for sun and rain.

Twice royal in his root
The sweet small olive-shoot
Here set in sacred earth ;
Twice dowered with glorious grace
From either heaven-born race
First blended in its birth ;
Fair god or genius of so fair an hour,
For love of either name
Twice crowned, with love and fame,
Guard and be gracious to the fair-named flower.

OCT. 19, 1875.

EX-VOTO.

WHEN their last hour shall rise
Pale on these mortal eyes,
Herself like one that dies,
And kiss me dying
The cold last kiss, and fold
Close round my limbs her cold
Soft shade as raiment rolled,
And leave them lying,—

If aught my soul would say
Might move to hear me pray
The birth-god of my day
That he might hearken,
This grace my heart should crave,—
To find no landward grave
That worldly springs make brave,
World's winters darken,—

Nor grow through gradual hours
The cold blind seed of flowers
Made by new beams and showers
From limbs that moulder,
Nor take my part with earth;
But find for death's new birth
A bed of larger girth,
More chaste and colder.

Not earth's for spring and fall,
Not earth's at heart, not all
Earth's making, though men call
Earth only mother,
Not hers at heart she bare
Me, but thy child, O fair
Sea, and thy brother's care,
The wind thy brother.

Yours was I born, and ye,
The sea-wind and the sea,
Made all my soul in me
A song forever,
A harp to string and smite
For love's sake of the bright
Wind and the sea's delight,
To fail them never:

Not while on this side death
I hear what either saith,
And drink of either's breath
With heart's thanksgiving
That in my veins like wine
Some sharp salt blood of thine,
Some springtide pulse of brine,
Yet leaps up living.

When thy salt lips well-nigh
Sucked in my mouth's last sigh,
Grudged I so much to die
  This death as others?
Was it no ease to think
The chalice from whose brink
Fate gave me death to drink
  Was thine,—my mother's?

Thee too, the all-fostering earth,
Fair as thy fairest birth,
More than thy worthiest worth,
  We call, we know thee,
More sweet and just and dread
Than live men highest of head
Or even thy holiest dead
  Laid low below thee.

The sunbeam on the sheaf,
The dew-fall on the leaf,
All joy, all grace, all grief,
  Are thine for giving:
Of thee our loves are born,
Our lives and loves, that mourn
And triumph; tares with corn,
  Dead seed with living;

All good and ill things done
In eye-shot of the sun
At last in thee made one
  Rest well contented;
All words of all man's breath,
And works he doth or saith,
All wholly done to death,
  None long lamented.

A slave to sons of thee,
Thou, seeming, yet art free;
But who shall make the sea
  Serve even in seeming?
What plough shall bid it bear
Seed to the sun and the air,
Fruit for thy strong sons' fare,
  Fresh wine's foam streaming?

What old-world son of thine,
Made drunk with death as wine,
Hath drunk the bright sea's brine
With lips of laughter ?
Thy blood they drink ; but he
Who hath drunken of the sea
Once deeplier than of thee
Shall drink not after.

Of thee thy sons of men
Drink deep, and thirst again,—
For wine in feasts, and then
In fields for slaughter ;
But thirst shall touch not him
Who hath felt with sense grown dim
Rise, covering lip and limb,
The wan sea's water.

All fire of thirst that aches
The salt sea cools and slakes
More than all springs or lakes,
Freshets or shallows ;
Wells where no beam can burn
Through frondage of the fern
That hides from hart and hern
The haunt it hallows.

Peace with all graves on earth
For death or sleep or birth
Be alway, one in worth
One with another ;
But when my time shall be,
O mother, O my sea,
Alive or dead, take me,
Me too, my mother !

PASTICHE.

Now the days are all gone over
Of our singing, love by lover,
Days of summer-colored seas
Blown adrift through beam and breeze.

Now the nights are all past over
Of our dreaming, dreams that hover
In a mist of fair false things,
Nights afloat on wide wan wings.

Now the loves with faith for mother,
Now the fears with hope for brother,
Scarce are with us as strange words,
Notes from songs of last year's birds.

Now all good that comes or goes is
As the smell of last year's roses,
As the radiance in our eyes
Shot from summer's ere he dies.

Now the morning faintlier risen
Seems no god come forth of prison,
But a bird of plume-plucked wing,
Pale with thought of evening.

Now hath hope, out-raced in running,
Given the torch up of his cunning,
And the palm he thought to wear,
Even to his own strong child,—despair.

BEFORE SUNSET.

In the lower lands of day
On the hither side of night,
There is nothing that will stay,
There are all things soft to sight;
Lighted shade and shadowy light
In the wayside and the way,
Hours the sun has spared to smite,
Flowers the rain has left to play.

Shall these hours run down and say
No good thing of thee and me?
Time that made us and will slay
Laughs at love in me and thee;
But if here the flowers may see
One whole hour of amorous breath,
Time shall die, and love shall be
Lord as time was over death.

SONG.

Love laid his sleepless head
On a thorny rosy bed ;
And his eyes with tears were red,
And pale his lips as the dead.

And fear and sorrow and scorn
Kept watch by his head forlorn,
Till the night was overworn,
And the world was merry with morn.

And Joy came up with the day,
And kissed Love's lips as he lay,
And the watchers ghostly and gray
Sped from his pillow away.

And his eyes as the dawn grew bright,
And his lips waxed ruddy as light :
Sorrow may reign for a night,
But day shall bring back delight.

A VISION OF SPRING IN WINTER.

I.

O tender time that love thinks long to see,
Sweet foot of spring that with her footfall sows
Late snowlike flowery leavings of the snows,
Be not too long irresolute to be !
O mother-month, where have they hidden thee ?
Out of the pale time of the flowerless rose,
I reach my heart out toward the springtime lands.
I stretch my spirit forth to the fair hours,
The purplest of the prime ;
I lean my soul down over them, with hands
Made wide to take the ghostly growths of flowers ;
I send my love back to the lovely time.

II.

Where has the greenwood hid thy gracious head?
  Veiled with what visions while the gray world grieves,
  Or muffled with what shadows of green leaves,
With warm intangible green shadows spread
To sweeten the sweet twilight for thy bed?
  What sleep enchants thee? what delight deceives?
Where the deep dreamlike dew before the dawn
  Feels not the fingers of the sunlight yet
    Its silver web unweave,
Thy footless ghost on some unfooted lawn
  Whose air the unrisen sunbeams fear to fret
    Lives a ghost's life of daylong dawn and eve.

III.

Sunrise it sees not, neither set of star,
  Large nightfall, nor imperial penilune,
  Nor strong sweet shape of the full-breasted noon;
But where the silver sandalled shadows are,
Too soft for arrows of the sun to mar,
  Moves with the mild gait of an ungrown moon:
Hard overhead the half-lit crescent swims,
  The tender-colored night draws hardly breath,
    The light is listening;
They watch the dawn of slender-shapen limbs,
  Virginal, born again of doubtful death,
    Chill foster-father of the weanling spring.

IV.

As sweet desire of day before the day,
  As dreams of love before the true love born,
  From the outer edge of winter overworn
The ghost arisen of May before the May
Takes through dim air her unawakened way,
  The gracious ghost of morning risen ere morn.
With little unblown breasts and child-eyed looks
  Following, the very maid, the girl-child spring,
    Lifts windward her bright brows,
Dips her light feet in warm and moving brooks,
  And kindles with her own mouth's coloring
    The fearful firstlings of the plumeless boughs.

V.

I seek thee sleeping, and awhile I see,
Fair face that art not, how thy maiden breath
Shall put at last the deadly days to death,
And fill the fields and fire the woods with thee,
And seaward hollows where my feet would be
When heaven shall hear the word that April saith
To change the cold heart of the weary time,
To stir and soften all the time to tears,
Tears joyfuller than mirth;
As even to May's clear height the young days climb
With feet not swifter than those fair first years
Whose flowers revive not with thy flowers on earth.

VI.

I would not bid thee, though I might, give back
One good thing youth has given and borne away:
I crave not any comfort of the day
That is not, nor on time's re-trodden track
Would turn to meet the white-robed hours or black
That long since left me on their mortal way;
Nor light nor love that has been, nor the breath
That comes with morning from the sun to be,
And sets light hope on fire;
No fruit, no flower thought once too fair for death,
No flower nor hour once fallen from life's green tree,
No leaf once plucked, or once fulfilled desire.

VII.

The morning song beneath the stars that fled
With twilight through the moonless mountain air,
While youth with burning lips and wreathless hair
Sang toward the sun that was to crown his head,
Rising; the hopes that triumphed and fell dead,
The sweet swift eyes and songs of hours that were,—
These may'st thou not give back forever; these.
As at the sea's heart all her wrecks lie waste,
Lie deeper than the sea;
But flowers thou may'st, and winds, and hours of ease,
And all its April to the world thou may'st
Give back, and half my April back to me.

AT PARTING.

For a day and night Love sang to us, played with us,
Folded us round from the dark and the light;
And our hearts were fulfilled of the music he made with us,
Made with our hearts and our lips while he stayed with us,
Stayed in mid passage his pinions from flight
For a day and a night.

From his foes that kept watch with his wings had he hidden us,
Covered us close from the eyes that would smite,
From the feet that had tracked and the tongues that had chidden us
Sheltering in shade of the myrtles forbidden us
Spirit and flesh growing one with delight
For a day and a night.

But his wings will not rest, and his feet will not stay for us:
Morning is here in the joy of its might;
With his breath has he sweetened a night and a day for us:
Now let him pass, and the myrtles make way for us;
Love can but last in us here at his height
For a day and a night.

THE WHITE CZAR.

[In an English magazine of 1877, there appeared a version of some insolent lines addressed by "A Russian Poet to the Empress of India." To these the first of the two following sonnets was designed to serve by way of counter-blast. The writer will scarcely be suspected of royalism or imperialism; but it seemed to him that an insult levelled by Muscovite lips at the ruler of England might perhaps be less unfitly than unofficially resented by an Englishman who was also a republican.]

I.

Gehazi by the hue that chills thy cheek
And Pilate by the hue that sears thine hand
Whence all earth's waters cannot wash the brand
That signs thy soul a manslayer's though thou speak

All Christ, with lips most murderous and most meek—
Thou set thy foot where England's used to stand!
Thou reach thy rod forth over Indian land!
Slave of the slaves that call thee lord, and weak
As their foul tongues who praise thee! son of them
Whose presence put the snows and stars to shame
In centuries dead and damned that reek below
Curse-consecrated, crowned with crime and flame,
To them that bare thee like them shalt thou go
Forth of man's life,—a leper white as snow.

II.

Call for clear water, wash thine hands, be clean,
Cry, *What is truth?* O Pilate! thou shalt know
Haply too soon, and gnash thy teeth for woe
Ere the outer darkness take thee round unseen
That hides the red ghosts of thy race obscene
Bound nine times round with hell's most dolorous flow,
And in its pools thy crownless head lie low
By his of Spain who dared an English queen
With half a world to hearten him for fight,
Till the wind gave his warriors and their might
To shipwreck and the corpse-encumbered sea.
But thou, take heed ere yet thy lips wax white,
Lest as it was with Philip so it be,
O white of name and red of hand, with thee!

RIZPAH.

How many sons, how many generations,
For how long years hast thou bewept, and known
Nor end of torment nor surcease of moan,
Rachel or Rizpah, wofullest of nations,
Crowned with the crowning sign of desolations,
And couldst not even scare off with hand or groan
Those carrion birds devouring bone by bone
The children of thy thousand tribulations?
Thou wast our warrior once; thy sons long dead

Against a foe less foul than this made head,
Poland, in years that sound and shine afar;
Ere the east beheld in thy bright sword-blade's stead
The rotten corpse-light of the Russian star
That lights towards hell his bond-slaves and their Czar.

TO LOUIS KOSSUTH.

Light of our fathers' eyes, and in our own
Star of the unsetting sunset! for thy name,
That on the front of noon was as a flame
In the great year nigh thirty years agone
When all the heavens of Europe shook and shone
With stormy wind and lightning, keeps its fame
And bears its witness all day through the same.
Not for past days and great deeds past alone,
Kossuth, we praise thee as our Landor praised;
But that now too we know thy voice upraised,—
Thy voice, the trumpet of the truth of God,
Thine hand, the thunder-bearer's, raised to smite
As with heaven's lightning for a sword and rod
Men's heads abased before the Muscovite.

THE PILGRIMS.

Who is your lady of love, O ye that pass
Singing? and is it for sorrow of that which was
That ye sing sadly, or dream of what shall be?
For gladly at once and sadly it seems ye sing.
—Our lady of love by you is unbeholden;
For hands she hath none, nor eyes, nor lips, nor golden
Treasure of hair, nor face nor form. But we
That love, we know her more fair than any thing.

—Is she a queen, having great gifts to give?
—Yea, these: that whoso hath seen her shall not live
Except he serve her sorrowing, with strange pain
Travail and bloodshedding and bitterer tears;

And when she bids die he shall surely die.
And he shall leave all things under the sky,
And go forth naked under sun and rain,
And work and wait and watch out all his years.

—Hath she on earth no place of habitation?
—Age to age calling, nation answering nation,
Cries out, Where is she? and there is none to say;
For if she be not in the spirit of men,
For if in the inward soul she hath no place,
In vain they cry unto her, seeking her face,
In vain their mouths make much of her; for they
Cry with vain tongues, till the heart lives again.

—O ye that follow, and have ye no repentance?
For on your brows is written a mortal sentence,
An hieroglyph of sorrow, a fiery sign,
That in your lives ye shall not pause or rest,
Nor have the sure sweet common love, nor keep
Friends and safe days, nor joy of life nor sleep.
—These have we not, who have one thing, the divine
Face and clear eyes of faith and fruitful breast.

—And ye shall die before your thrones be won.
—Yea, and the changed world and the liberal sun
Shall move and shine without us, and we lie
Dead; but if she too move on earth, and live,
But if the old world with all the old irons rent
Laugh and give thanks, shall we be not content?
Nay, we shall rather live, we shall not die,
Life being so little, and death so good to give.

—And these men shall forget you.—Yea, but we
Shall be a part of the earth and the ancient sea,
And heaven-high air august, and awful fire,
And all things good; and no man's heart shall beat
But somewhat in it of our blood once shed
Shall quiver and quicken, as now in us the dead
Blood of men slain and the old same life's desire
Plants in their fiery footprints our fresh feet.

—But ye that might be clothed with all things pleasant,
Ye are foolish that put off the fair soft present,
That clothe yourselves with the cold future air ;
When mother and father and tender sister and brother
And the old live love that was shall be as ye,
Dust, and no fruit of loving life shall be.
—She shall be yet who is more than all these were,
Than sister or wife or father unto us or mother.

—Is this worth life, is this, to win for wages ?
Lo, the dead mouths of the awful gray-grown ages,
The venerable, in the past that is their prison,
In the outer darkness, in the unopening grave,
Laugh, knowing how many as ye now say have said,
How many, and all are fallen, are fallen and dead :
Shall ye dead rise, and these dead have not risen ?
—Not we but she, who is tender, and swift to save.

—Are ye not weary and faint not by the way,
Seeing night by night devoured of day by day,
Seeing hour by hour consumed in sleepless fire ?
Sleepless ; and ye too, when shall ye too sleep ?
—We are weary in heart and head, in hands and feet,
And surely more than all things sleep were sweet,—
Than all things save the inexorable desire
Which whoso knoweth shall neither faint nor weep.

—Is this so sweet that one were fain to follow ?
Is this so sure where all men's hopes are hollow,
Even this your dream, that by much tribulation
Ye shall make whole flawed hearts, and bowed necks straight ?
—Nay, though our life were blind, our death were fruitless,
Not therefore were the whole world's high hope rootless ;
But man to man, nation would turn to nation,
And the old life live, and the old great world be great.

—Pass on, then, and pass by us, and let us be,
For what light think ye after life to see?
And if the world fare better will ye know?
And if man triumph who shall seek you and say?
—Enough of light is this for one life's span,
That all men born are mortal, but not man;
And we men bring death lives by night to sow,
That man may reap and eat and live by day.

THE LITANY OF NATIONS.

CHORUS.

If with voice of words or prayers thy sons may reach thee,
We thy latter sons, the men thine after-birth,
We the children of thy gray-grown age, O Earth,
O our mother everlasting, we beseech thee,
By the sealed and secret ages of thy life;
By the darkness wherein grew thy sacred forces;
By the songs of stars thy sisters in their courses;
By thine own song hoarse and hollow and shrill with strife;
By thy voice distuned and marred of modulation;
By the discord of thy measure's march with theirs;
By the beauties of thy bosom, and the cares;
By thy glory of growth, and splendor of thy station;
By the shame of men thy children, and the pride;
By the pale-cheeked hope that sleeps and weeps and passes,
As the gray dew from the morning mountain grasses;
By the white-lipped sightless memories that abide;
By the silence and the sound of many sorrows;
By the joys that leapt up living and fell dead;
By the veil that hides thy hands and breasts and head,
Wrought of divers-colored days and nights and morrows;
Isis, thou that knowest of God what worlds are worth,

Thou the ghost of God, the mother uncreated,
Soul for whom the floating forceless ages waited
As our forceless fancies wait on thee, O Earth;
Thou the body and soul, the father-god and mother,
If at all it move thee, knowing of all things done
Here where evil things and good things are not one,
But their faces are as fire against each other;
By thy morning and thine evening, night and day;
By the first white light that stirs and strives and hovers
As a bird above the brood her bosom covers,
By the sweet last star that takes the westward way;
By the night whose feet are shod with snow or thunder,
Fledged with plumes of storm, or soundless as the dew;
By the vesture bound of many-folded blue
Round her breathless breasts, and all the woven wonder;
By the golden-growing eastern stream of sea;
By the sounds of sunrise moving in the mountains;
By the forces of the floods and unsealed fountains;
Thou that badest man be born, bid man be free.

GREECE.

I am she that made thee lovely with my beauty
From north to south:
Mine, the fairest lips, took first the fire of duty
From thine own mouth.
Mine, the fairest eyes, sought first thy laws, and knew them
Truths undefiled;
Mine, the fairest hands, took freedom first into them,
A weanling child.
By my light, now he lies sleeping, seen above him
Where none sees other;
By my dead that loved, and living men that love him,—
(*Cho.*) Hear us, O mother!

ITALY.

I am she that was the light of thee enkindled
When Greece grew dim ;
She whose life grew up with man's free life, and dwindled
With wane of him ;
She that once by sword and once by word imperial
Struck bright thy gloom ;
And a third time, casting off these years funereal,
Shall burst thy tomb.
By that bond 'twixt thee and me whereat affrighted
Thy tyrants fear us ;
By that hope and this remembrance reunited,—
(*Cho.*) O mother, hear us !

SPAIN.

I am she that set thy seal upon the nameless
West worlds of seas ;
And my sons as brides took unto them the tameless
Hesperides ;
Till my sins and sons through sinless lands dispersèd,
With red flame shod,
Made accurst the name of man, and thrice accursèd
The name of God.
Lest for those past fires the fires of my repentance
Hell's fume yet smother,
Now my blood would buy remission of my sentence,—
(*Cho.*) Hear us, O mother !

FRANCE.

I am she that was thy sign and standard-bearer,
Thy voice and cry ;
She that washed thee with her blood, and left thee fairer,
The same was I.
Were not these the hands that raised thee fallen, and fed thee,
These hands defiled ?

Was not I thy tongue that spake, thine eye that led thee,—
Not I thy child ?
By the darkness on our dreams, and the dead errors
Of dead times near us ;
By the hopes that hang around thee, and the terrors,—
(*Cho.*) O mother, hear us !

RUSSIA.

I am she whose hands are strong, and her eyes blinded,
And lips athirst,
Till upon the night of nations many-minded
One bright day burst ;
Till the myriad stars be molten into one light,
And that light thine ;
Till the soul of man be parcel of the sunlight,
And thine of mine.
By the snows that blanch not him, nor cleanse from slaughter,
Who slays his brother ;
By the stains and by the chains on me thy daughter,—
(*Cho.*) Hear us, O mother !

SWITZERLAND.

I am she that shows on mighty limbs and maiden
Nor chain nor stain ;
For what blood can touch these hands with gold unladen,
These feet what chain ?
By the surf of spears one shieldless bosom breasted,
And was my shield,
Till the plume-plucked Austrian vulture-heads twin-crested
Twice drenched the field.
By the snows and souls untrampled and untroubled
That shine to cheer us,
Light of those to these responsive and redoubled,—
(*Cho.*) O mother, hear us !

GERMANY.

I am she beside whose forest-hidden fountains
Slept freedom armed ;
By the magic born to music in my mountains,
Heart-chained and charmed.
By those days, the very dream whereof delivers
My soul from wrong ;
By the sounds that make of all my ringing rivers
None knows what song ;
By the many tribes and names of my division
One from another ;
By the single eye of sun-compelling vision,—
(*Cho.*) Hear us, O mother !

ENGLAND.

I am she that was and was not of thy chosen,
Free, and not free ;
She that fed thy springs, till now her springs are frozen ;
Yet I am she.
By the sea that clothed and sun that saw me splendid
And fame that crowned,
By the song-fires and the sword-fires mixed and blended
That robed me round ;
By the star that Milton's soul for Shelley's lighted,
Whose rays insphere us ;
By the beacon-bright Republic far-off sighted,—
(*Cho.*) O mother, hear us !

CHORUS.

Turn away from us the cross-blown blasts of error,
That drown each other ;
Turn away the fearful cry, the loud-tongued terror,
O Earth, O mother !
Turn away their eyes who track, their hearts who follow,
The pathless past ;
Show the soul of man, as summer shows the swallow,
The way at last.

By the sloth of men that all too long endure men
On man to tread;
By the cry of men, the bitter cry of poor men
That faint for bread;
By the blood-sweat of the people in the garden
Inwalled of kings;
By his passion interceding for their pardon
Who do these things;
By the sightless souls and fleshless limbs that labor
For not their fruit;
By the foodless mouth with foodless heart for neighbor,
That, mad, is mute;
By the child that famine eats as worms the blossom—
Ah God, the child!—
By the milkless lips that strain the bloodless bosom
Till woe runs wild;
By the pastures that give grass to feed the lamb in,
Where men lack meat:
By the cities clad with gold and shame and famine;
By field and street,
By the people, by the poor man, by the master
That men call slave;
By the cross-winds of defeat and of disaster,
By wreck, by wave;
By the helm that keeps us still to sunwards driving,
Still eastward bound,
Till, as night watch ends, day burn on eyes reviving,
And land be found;
We thy children, that arraign not nor impeach thee
Though no stars steer us,
By the waves that wash the morning we beseech thee,
O mother, hear us!

CHRISTMAS ANTIPHONES.

I.

IN CHURCH.

Thou whose birth on earth
Angels sang to men,
While thy stars made mirth,
Saviour at thy birth,
This day born again;

As this night was bright
With thy cradle-ray,
Very light of light,
Turn the wild world's night
To thy perfect day.

God whose feet made sweet
Those wild ways they trod,
From thy fragrant feet
Staining field and street
With the blood of God;

God whose breast is rest
In the time of strife,
In thy secret breast
Sheltering souls oppress
From the heat of life;

God whose eyes are skies
Love-lit as with spheres
By the lights that rise
To thy watching eyes,
Orbèd lights of tears;

God whose heart hath part
In all grief that is,
Was not man's the dart
That went through thine heart,
And the wound not his?

Where the pale souls wail,
Held in bonds of death,
Where all spirits quail,
Came thy Godhead pale
Still from human breath,—

Pale from life and strife,
Wan with manhood, came
Forth of mortal life,
Pierced as with a knife,
Scarred as with a flame.

Thou the Word and Lord
  In all time and space
Heard, beheld, adored,
With all ages poured
  Forth before thy face,—

Lord, what worth in earth
  Drew thee down to die?
What therein was worth,
Lord, thy death and birth?
  What beneath thy sky?

Light above all love
  By thy love was lit,
And brought down the Dove
Feathered from above
  With the wings of it.

From the height of night,
  Was not thine the star
That led forth with might
By no worldly light
  Wise men from afar?

Yet the wise men's eyes
  Saw thee not more clear
Than they saw thee rise
Who in shepherds' guise
  Drew as poor men near.

Yet thy poor endure
  And are with us yet;
Be thy name a sure
Refuge for thy poor
  Whom men's eyes forget.

Thou whose ways we praise,
  Clear alike and dark,
Keep our works and ways
This and all thy days
  Safe inside thine ark.

Who shall keep thy sheep,
  Lord, and lose not one?
Who save one shall keep,
Lest the shepherds sleep?
  Who beside the Son?

From the grave-deep wave,
  From the sword and flame,
Thou, even thou, shalt save
Souls of king and slave
  Only by thy Name.

Light not born with morn
  Or her fires above,
Jesus virgin-born,
Held of men in scorn,
  Turn their scorn to love.

Thou whose face gives grace
  As the sun's doth heat,
Let thy sun-bright face
Lighten time and space
  Here beneath thy feet.

Bid our peace increase,
  Thou that madest morn;
Bid oppressions cease;
Bid the night be peace;
  Bid the day be born.

II.

OUTSIDE CHURCH.

We whose days and ways
  All the night makes dark,—
What day shall we praise
Of these weary days
  That our life-drops mark?

We whose mind is blind,
  Fed with hope of naught;
Wastes of worn mankind,
Without heart or mind,
  Without meat or thought;

We with strife of life
  Worn till all life cease,
Want, a whetted knife,
Sharpening strife on strife,
  How should we love peace?

Ye whose meat is sweet
  And your wine-cup red,
Us beneath your feet
Hunger grinds as wheat,—
  Grinds to make you bread.

Ye whose night is bright
  With soft rest and heat,
Clothed like day with light,
Us the naked night
  Slays from street to street.

Hath your God no rod,
  That ye tread so light?
Man on us as God,
God as man hath trod,—
  Trod us down with might.

We that one by one
  Bleed from either's rod,
What for us hath done
Man beneath the sun,
  What for us hath God?

We whose blood is food
  Given your wealth to feed,
From the Christless rood
Red with no God's blood,
  But with man's indeed;

How shall we that see
  Night-long overhead
Life, the flowerless tree,
Nailed whereon as we
  Were our fathers dead,—

We whose ear can hear,
  Not whose tongue can name,
Famine, ignorance, fear,
Bleeding tear by tear
  Year by year of shame,—

Till the dry life die
  Out of bloodless breast,
Out of beamless eye,
Out of mouths that cry
  Till death feed with rest,—

How shall we as ye,
  Though ye bid us, pray?
Though ye call, can we
Hear you call, or see,
  Though ye show us day?

We whose name is shame,
  We whose souls walk bare,
Shall we call the same
God as ye by name,
  Teach our lips your prayer?—

God, forgive and give,
  For His sake who died?—
Nay, for ours who live,
How shall we forgive
  Thee, then, on our side?

We whose right to light
  Heaven's high noon denies,
Whom the blind beams smite
That for you shine bright,
  And but burn our eyes,—

With what dreams of beams
  Shall we build up day,
At what sourceless streams
Seek to drink in dreams
  Ere they pass away?

In what street shall meet,
  At what market-place,
Your feet and our feet,
With one goal to greet,
  Having run one race?

What one hope shall ope
  For us all as one
One same horoscope,
Where the soul sees hope
  That outburns the sun?

At what shrine what wine,
  At what board what bread,
Salt as blood or brine,
Shall we share in sign
  How we poor were fed?

In what hour what power
  Shall we pray for morn,
If your perfect hour,
When all day bears flower,
  Not for us is born?

III.

BEYOND CHURCH.

Ye that weep in sleep,
  Souls and bodies bound,
Ye that all night keep
Watch for change, and weep
  That no change is found;

Ye that cry and die,
  And the world goes on
Without ear or eye,
And the days go by
  Till all days are gone:

Man shall do for you,
  Men the sons of man,
What no god would do
That they sought unto
  While the blind years ran.

Brotherhood of good,
  Equal laws and rights,
Freedom, whose sweet food
Feeds the multitude
  All their days and nights

With the bread full-fed
  Of her body blest
And the soul's wine shed
From her table spread
  Where the world is guest,—

Mingling me and thee,
  When like light of eyes
Flashed through thee and me
Truth shall make us free,
  Liberty make wise:

These are they whom day
  Follows and gives light
Whence they see to slay
Night, and burn away
  All the seed of night.

What of thine and mine,
  What of want and wealth,
When one faith is wine
For my heart and thine,
  And one draught is health?

For no sect elect
  Is the soul's wine poured,
And her table decked:
Whom should man reject
  From man's common board?

Gods refuse and choose,
  Grudge and sell and spare:
None shall man refuse,
None of all men lose,
  None leave out of care.

No man's might of sight
  Knows that hour before;
No man's hand hath might
To put back that light
  For one hour the more.

Not though all men call,
  Kneeling with void hands,
Shall they see light fall
Till it come for all
  Tribes of men and lands.

No desire brings fire
  Down from heaven by prayer,
Though man's vain desire
Hang faith's wind-struck lyre
  Out in tuneless air.

One hath breath, and saith
  What the tune shall be,—
Time, who puts his breath
Into life and death,
  Into earth and sea.

To and fro years flow,
  Fill their tides and ebb,
As his fingers go
Weaving to and fro
  One unfinished web.

All the range of change
  Hath its bounds therein,
  All the lives that range
All the byways strange
  Named of death or sin.

Star from far to star
  Speaks, and white moons wake,
Watchful from afar
What the night's ways are
  For the morning's sake.

Many names and flames
  Pass and flash and fall,
Night-begotten names,
And the night reclaims,
  As she bare them, all.

But the sun is one,
  And the sun's name Right;
And when light is none
Saving of the sun,
  All men shall have light.

All shall see and be
  Parcel of the morn:
Ay, though blind were we,
None shall choose but see
  When that day is born.

MATER DOLOROSA.

Citoyen, lui dit Enjolras, ma mère c'est la Rèpublique.—*Les Misérables.*

Who is it that sits by the way, by the wild wayside,
In a rent stained raiment, the robe of a cast-off bride,
In the dust, in the rainfall sitting, with soiled feet bare,
With the night for a garment upon her, with torn wet hair?
She is fairer of face than the daughters of men, and her eyes,
Worn through with her tears, are deep as the depth of skies.

This is she for whose sake being fallen, for whose abject sake,
Earth groans in the blackness of darkness, and men's hearts break.
This is she for whose love, having seen her, the men that were
Poured life out as water, and shed their souls upon air.

This is she for whose glory their years were counted as foam ;
Whose face was a light upon Greece, was a fire upon Rome.

It is now not surely a vain thing, a foolish and vain,
To sit down by her, mourn to her, serve her, partake in the pain ?
She is gray with the dust of time on his manifold ways,
Where her faint feet stumble and falter through yearlong days.
Shall she help us at all, O fools, give fruit or give fame,
Who herself is a name despised, a rejected name ?

We have not served her for guerdon. If any do so,
That his mouth may be sweet with such honey, we care not to know.
We have drunk from a wine-unsweetened, a perilous cup,
A draught very bitter. The kings of the earth stood up,
And the rulers took counsel together, to smite her and slay ;
And the blood of her wounds is given us to drink to-day.

Can these bones live ? or the leaves that are dead leaves bud ?
Or the dead blood drawn from her veins be in your veins blood ?
Will ye gather up water again that was drawn and shed ?
In the blood is the life of the veins, and her veins are dead.
For the lives that are over are over, and past things past ;
She had her day, and it is not ; was first, and is last.

Is it nothing unto you, then, all ye that pass by,
If her breath be left in her lips, if she live now or die ?

Behold now O people, and say if she be not fair,
Whom your fathers followed to find her, with praise and prayer,
And rejoiced, having found her, though roof they had none, nor bread.
But ye care not: what is it to you if her day be dead?

It was well with our fathers; their sound was in all men's lands;
There was fire in their hearts, and the hunger of fight in their hands.
Naked and strong they went forth in her strength like flame,
For her love's and her name's sake of old, her republican name.
But their children, by kings made quiet, by priests made wise,
Love better the heat of their hearths than the light of her eyes.

Are they children of these thy children indeed, who have sold,
O golden goddess, the light of thy face for gold?
Are thy sons indeed of the sons of thy dayspring of hope,
Whose lives are in fief of an emperor, whose souls of a Pope?
Hide then thine head, O belovèd! thy time is done;
Thy kingdom is broken in heaven, and blind thy sun.

What sleep is upon you, to dream she indeed shall rise,
When the hopes are dead in her heart as the tears in her eyes?
If ye sing of her dead, will she stir? if ye weep for her, weep?
Come away now, leave her: what hath she to do but sleep?
But ye that mourn are alive, and have years to be;
And life is good, and the world is wiser than we.

Yea, wise is the world and mighty, with years to
give,
And years to promise; but how long now shall it
live?
And foolish and poor is faith, and her ways are bare,
Till she find the way of the sun, and the morning air.
In that hour shall this dead face shine as the face of
the sun,
And the soul of man and her soul and the world's
be one.

MATER TRIUMPHALIS.

Mother of man's time-travelling generations,
Breath of his nostrils, heart-blood of his heart,
God above all gods, worshipped of all nations,
Light above light, law beyond law, thou art.

Thy face is as a sword, smiting in sunder
Shadows and chains, and dreams and iron things;
The sea is dumb before thy face, the thunder
Silent, the skies are narrower than thy wings.

Angels and gods, spirit and sense, thou takest
In thy right hand as drops of dust or dew;
The temples and the towers of time thou breakest,
His thoughts and words and works, to make them
new.

All we have wandered from thy ways, have hidden
Eyes from thy glory and ears from calls they
heard;
Called of thy trumpets vainly, called and chidden,
Scourged of thy speech, and wounded of thy word.

We have known thee, and have not known thee;
stood beside thee,
Felt thy lips breathe, set foot where thy feet trod,
Loved and renounced, and worshipped and denied
thee,
As though thou wert but as another god.

"One hour for sleep," we said, "and yet one other;
All day we served her, and who shall serve by night?"
Not knowing of thee, thy face not knowing, O mother,
O light wherethrough the darkness is as light.

Men that forsook thee hast thou not forsaken,
Races of men that knew not hast thou known;
Nations that slept thou hast doubted not to waken,
Worshippers of strange gods to make thine own.

All old gray histories hiding thy clear features,
O secret spirit and sovereign, all men's tales,
Creeds woven of men, thy children and thy creatures,
They have woven for vestures of thee and for veils.

Thine hands, without election or exemption,
Feed all men fainting from false peace or strife,
O thou, the resurrection and redemption,
The godhead and the manhood and the life.

Thy wings shadow the waters; thine eyes lighten
The horror of the hollows of the night;
The depths of the earth and the dark places brighten
Under thy feet, whiter than fire is white.

Death is subdued to thee, and hell's bands broken;
Where thou art only is heaven: who hears not thee,
Time shall not hear him; when men's names are spoken,
A nameless sign of death shall his name be.

Deathless shall be the death, the name be nameless;
Sterile of stars his twilight time of breath;
With fire of hell shall shame consume him shameless,
And dying, all the night darken his death.

The years are as thy garments, the world's ages
As sandals bound and loosed from thy swift feet;
Time serves before thee, as one that hath for wages
Praise or shame only, bitter words or sweet.

Thou sayest "Well done," and all a century kindles;
Again, thou sayest, "Depart from sight of me,"
And all the light of face of all men dwindles,
And the age is as the broken glass of thee.

The night is as a seal set on men's faces,
On faces fallen of men that take no light,
Nor give light in the deeps of the dark places,
Blind things, incorporate with the body of night.

Their souls are serpents winter-bound and frozen,
Their shame is as a tame beast, at their feet
Couched; their cold lips deride thee and thy chosen,
Their lying lips made gray with dust for meat.

Then when their time is full and days run over,
The splendor of thy sudden brow made bare
Darkens the morning; thy bared hands uncover
The veils of light and night and the awful air.

And the world naked as a new-born maiden
Stands virginal and splendid as at birth,
With all thine heaven of all its light unladen,
Of all its love unburdened all thine earth.

For the utter earth and the utter air of heaven,
And the extreme depth is thine, and the extreme height;
Shadows of things and veils of ages riven
Are as men's kings unkingdomed in thy sight.

Through the iron years, the centuries brazen-gated,
By the ages' barred, impenetrable doors,
From the evening to the morning have we waited,
Should thy foot haply sound on the awful floors.

The floors untrodden of the sun's feet glimmer,
The star-unstricken pavements of the night;
Do the lights burn inside? the lights wax dimmer
On festal faces withering out of sight.

The crowned heads lose the light on them; it may be
Dawn is at hand to smite the loud feast dumb;
To bind the torch-lit centuries till the day be,
The feasting kingdoms till thy kingdom come.

Shall it not come ? deny they or dissemble,
Is it not even as lightning from on high
Now ? and though many a soul close eyes, and tremble,
How should they tremble at all who love thee as I?

I am thine harp between thine hands, O mother !
All my strong chords are strained with love of thee.
We grapple in love and wrestle, as each with other
Wrestle the wind and the unreluctant sea.

I am no courtier of thee sober-suited,
Who loves a little for a little pay.
Me not thy winds and storms, nor thrones disrooted,
Nor molten crowns, nor thine own sins, dismay.

Sinned hast thou sometime, therefore art thou sinless ;
Stained hast thou been, who art therefore without stain ;
Even as man's soul is kin to thee, but kinless
Thou, in whose womb Time sows the all-various grain.

I do not bid thee spare me, O dreadful mother !
I pray thee that thou spare not, of thy grace.
How were it with me then, if ever another
Should come to stand before thee in this my place?

I am the trumpet at thy lips, thy clarion,
Full of thy cry, sonorous with thy breath ;
The graves of souls born worms, and creeds grown carrion
Thy blast of judgment fills with fires of death.

Thou art the player whose organ-keys are thunders,
And I, beneath thy foot, the pedal prest ;
Thou art the ray whereat the rent night sunders,
And I the cloudlet borne upon thy breast.

I shall burn up before thee, pass and perish,
As haze in sunrise on the red sea-line ;
But thou from dawn to sunsetting shalt cherish
The thoughts that led and souls that lighted mine.

Reared between night and noon and truth and error,
  Each twilight-travelling bird that trills and screams
Sickens at midday, nor can face for terror
  The imperious heaven's inevitable extremes.

I have no spirit of skill with equal fingers
  At sign to sharpen or to slacken strings ;
I keep no time of song with gold-perched singers
  And chirp of linnets on the wrists of kings.

I am thy storm-thrush of the days that darken,
  Thy petrel in the foam that bears thy bark
To port through night and tempest : if thou hearken,
  My voice is in thy heaven before the lark.

My song is in the mist that hides thy morning,
  My cry is up before the day for thee ;
I have heard thee and beheld thee and give warning,
  Before thy wheels divide the sky and sea.

Birds shall wake with thee voiced and feathered fairer,
  To see in summer what I see in spring :
I have eyes and heart to endure thee, O thunder-bearer,
  And they shall be who shall have tongues to sing.

I have love at least, and have not fear, and part not
  From thine unnavigable and wingless way ;
Thou tarriest, and I have not said thou art not,
  Nor all thy night long have denied thy day.

Darkness to daylight shall lift up thy pæan,
  Hill to hill thunder, vale cry back to vale,
With wind-notes as of eagles Æschylean,
  And Sappho singing in the nightingale.

Sung to by mighty sons of dawn and daughters,
  Of this night's songs thine ear shall keep but one,—
That supreme song which shook the channelled waters,
  And called thee skyward as God calls the sun.

Come, though all heaven again be fire above thee;
Though death before thee come to clear thy sky;
Let us but see in his thy face who love thee;
Yea, though thou slay us, arise, and let us die.

SIENA.

Inside this northern summer's fold
The fields are full of naked gold,
Broadcast from heaven on lands it loves;
The green veiled air is full of doves;
Soft leaves that sift the sunbeams let
Light on the small warm grasses wet
Fall in short broken kisses sweet,
And break again like waves that beat
Round the sun's feet.

But I, for all this English mirth
Of golden-shod and dancing days,
And the old green-girt sweet-hearted earth,
Desire what here no spells can raise.
Far hence, with holier heavens above,
The lovely city of my love
Bathes deep in the sun-satiate air
That flows round no fair thing more fair,
Her beauty bare.

There the utter sky is holier, there
More pure the intense white height of air,
More clear men's eyes that mine would meet,
And the sweet springs of things more sweet.
There, for this one warm note of doves
A clamor of a thousand loves
Storms the night's ear, the day's assails,
From the tempestuous nightingales,
And fills, and fails.

O gracious city well-beloved!
Italian, and a maiden crowned,
Siena, my feet are no more moved
Toward thy strange-shapen mountain-bound;

But my heart in me turns and moves,
O lady loveliest of my loves,
Toward thee, to lie before thy feet,
And gaze from thy fair fountain-seat
Up the sheer street;

And the house midway hanging see
That saw Saint Catherine bodily,
Felt on its floors her sweet feet move,
And the live light of fiery love
Burn from her beautiful strange face,
As in the sanguine sacred place
Where in pure hands she took the head
Severed, and with pure lips still red
Kissed the lips dead.

For years through, sweetest of the saints,
In quiet without cease she wrought,
Till cries of men and fierce complaints
From outward moved her maiden thought;
And prayers she heard and sighs toward France,—
"God, send us back deliverance,
Send back thy servants, lest we die!"
With an exceeding bitter cry
They smote the sky.

Then in her sacred saving hands
She took the sorrows of the lands,
With maiden palms she lifted up
The sick time's blood-imbittered cup,
And in her virgin garment furled
The faint limbs of a wounded world.
Clothed with calm love and clear desire,
She went forth in her soul's attire,
A missive fire.

Across the might of men that strove
It shone, and over heads of kings;
And molten in red flames of love
Were swords and many monstrous things;
And shields were lowered, and snapt were spears,
And sweeter-tuned the clamorous years;
And faith came back, and peace, that were
Fled; for she bade, saying, "Thou, God's heir,
Hast thou no care?

"Lo, men lay waste thine heritage
Still, and much heathen people rage
Against thee, and devise vain things.
What comfort in the face of kings,
What counsel is there? Turn thine eyes
And thine heart from them in like wise;
Turn thee unto thine holy place
To help us that of God for grace
Require thy face.

"For who shall hear us if not thou
In a strange land? what doest thou there?
Thy sheep are spoiled, and the ploughers plough
Upon us: why hast thou no care
For all this, and beyond strange hills
Liest unregardful what snow chills
Thy foldless flock, or what rains beat?
Lo, in thine ears, before thy feet,
Thy lost sheep bleat.

"And strange men feed on faultless lives,
And there is blood, and men put knives,
Shepherd, unto the young lamb's throat;
And one hath eaten, and one smote,
And one had hunger and is fed
Full of the flesh of these, and red
With blood of these as who drinks wine.
And God knoweth, who hath sent thee a sign,
If these were thine."

But the Pope's heart within him burned,
So that he rose up, seeing the sign
And came among them; but she turned
Back to her daily way divine,
And fed her faith with silent things,
And lived her life with curbed white wings,
And mixed herself with heaven, and died;
And now on the sheer city-side
Smiles like a bride.

You see her in the fresh clear gloom,
Where walls shut out the flame and bloom
Of full-breathed summer, and the roof
Keeps the keen ardent air aloof

And sweet weight of the violent sky :
There bodily beheld on high,
She seems as one hearing in tune
H aven within heaven, at heaven's full noon,
In sacred swoon,—

A solemn swoon of sense that aches
With imminent blind heat of heaven,
While all the wide-eyed spirit wakes,
Vigilant of the supreme Seven,
Whose choral flames in God's sight move,
Made unendurable with love,
That without wind or blast of breath
Compels all things, through life and death,
Whither God saith.

There on the dim side-chapel wall
Thy mighty touch memorial,
Razzi, raised up, for ages dead,
And fixed for us her heavenly head ;
And, rent with plaited thorn and rod,
Bared the live likeness of her God
To men's eyes turning from strange lands,
Where, pale from thine immortal hands,
Christ wounded stands ;

And the blood blots his holy hair
And white brows over hungering eyes
That plead against us, and the fair
Mute lips forlorn of words or sighs
In the great torment that bends down
His bruised head with the bloomless crown,
White as the unfruitful thorn-flower,—
A God beheld in dreams that were
Beheld of her.

In vain on all these sins and years
Falls the sad blood, fall the slow tears,—
In vain poured forth as water-springs,
Priests, on your altars, and ye, kings,
About your seats of sanguine gold :
Still your God, spat upon and sold,
Bleeds at your hands ; but now is gone
All his flock from him saving one,—
Judas alone.

Surely your race it was that he,
O men signed backward with his name!
Beholding in Gethsemane,
Bled the red bitter sweat of shame,
Knowing how the word of Christian should
Mean to men evil and not good,
Seem to men shameful for your sake,
Whose lips, for all the prayers they make,
Man's blood must slake.

But blood nor tears ye love not, you
That my love leads my longing to,
Fair as the world's old faith of flowers,
O golden goddesses of ours!
From what Idalian rose-pleasance
Hath Aphrodite bidden glance
The lovelier lightnings of your feet?
From what sweet Paphian sward or seat
Led you more sweet?

O white three sisters, three as one,
With flower-like arms for flowery bands,
Your linked limbs glitter like the sun,
And times lies beaten at your hands.
Time and wild years and wars and men
Pass, and ye care not whence or when;
With calm lips over-sweet for scorn,
Ye watch night pass, O children born
Of the old-world morn!

Ah! in this strange and shrineless place,
What doth a goddess, what a Grace,
Where no Greek worships her shrined limbs
With wreaths and Cytherean hymns?
Where no lute makes luxurious
The adoring airs in Amathus,
Till the maid, knowing her mother near,
Sobs with love, aching with sweet fear?
What do ye here?

For the outer land is sad, and wears
A raiment of a flaming fire;
And the fierce fruitless mountain stairs
Climb, yet seem wroth and loath to aspire,—

Climb, and break, and are broken down,
And through their clefts and crests the town
Looks west, and sees the dead sun lie,
In sanguine death that stains the sky
With angry dye.

And from the war-worn wastes without
In twilight, in the time of doubt,
One sound comes of one whisper, where
Moved with low motions of slow air
The great trees nigh the castle swing
In the sad-colored evening:
"*Ricorditi di me, che son*
La Pia,"—that small sweet word alone
Is not yet gone.

"*Ricorditi di me*,"—the sound
Sole out of deep dumb days remote,
Across the fiery and fatal ground
Comes tender as a hurt bird's note
To where, a ghost with empty hands,
A woe-worn ghost, her palace stands
In the mid city, where the strong
Bells turn the sunset air to song,
And the towers throng.

With other face, with speech the same,
A mightier maiden's likeness came
Late among mourning men that slept,
A sacred ghost that went and wept,
White as the passion-wounded Lamb,
Saying, "Ah, remember me, that am
Italia." (From deep sea to sea
Earth heard, earth knew her, that this was she.)
"*Ricorditi.*

"Love made me of all things fairest thing,
And Hate unmade me; this knows he
Who with God's sacerdotal ring
Enringed mine hand, espousing me."
Yea, in thy myriad-mooded woe,
Yea, Mother, hast thou not said so?
Have not our hearts within us stirred,
O thou most holiest, at thy word?
Have we not heard?

As this dead tragic land that she
Found deadly, such was time to thee ;
Years passed thee withering in the red
Maremma,—years that deemed thee dead,
Ages that sorrowed or that scorned ;
And all this while, though all they mourned,
Thou sawest the end of things unclean,
And the unborn that should see thee a queen.
Have we not seen ?

The weary poet, thy sad son,
Upon thy soil, under thy skies,
Saw all Italian things save one,—
Italia : this thing missed his eyes ;
The old mother-might, the breast, the face,
That reared, that lit the Roman race,—
This not Leopardi saw ; but we,
What is it, Mother, that we see,—
What, if not thee ?

Look thou from Siena southward home,
Where the priest's pall hangs rent on Rome,
And through the red rent swaddling-bands
Toward thine she strains her laboring hands.
Look thou and listen, and let be
All the dead quick, all the bond free ;
In the blind eyes let there be sight ;
In the eighteen centuries of the night
Let there be light.

Bow down the beauty of thine head,
Sweet, and with lips of living breath
Kiss thy sons sleeping and thy dead,
That there be no more sleep or death.
Give us thy light, thy might, thy love,
Whom thy face seen afar above
Drew to thy feet : and when, being free,
Thou hast blest thy children born to thee,
Bless also me,—

Me, that when others played or slept,
Sat still under thy cross, and wept ;
Me, who so early and unaware
Felt fall on bent bared brows and hair

(Thin drops of the overflowing flood!)
The bitter blessing of thy blood,
The sacred shadow of thy pain,
Thine, the true maiden-mother, slain
And raised again;

Me, consecrated, if I might,
To praise thee, or to love at least,
O mother of all men's dear delight,
Thou madest a choral-souled boy-priest,
Before my lips had leave to sing,
Or my hands hardly strength to cling
About the intolerable tree
Whereto they had nailed my heart and thee,
And said, "Let be."

For to thee too, the high Fates gave
Grace to be sacrificed and save,
That being arisen, in the equal sun,
God and the People should be one;
By those red roads thy footprints trod,
Man more divine, more human God,
Saviour; that where no light was known
But darkness, and a daytime flown,
Light should be shown.

Let there be light, O Italy!
For our feet falter in the night.
O lamp of living years to be,
O light of God, let there be light!
Fill with a love keener than flame
Men sealed in spirit with thy name,
The cities and the Roman skies,
Where men with other than man's eyes
Saw thy sun rise.

For theirs thou wast, and thine were they,
Whose names outshine thy very day:
For they are thine, and theirs thou art,
Whose blood beats living in man's heart,
Remembering ages fled and dead
Wherein for thy sake these men bled;
They that saw Trebia, they that see
Mentana, they in years to be
That shall see thee.

For thine are all of us, and ours
Thou ; till the seasons bring to birth
A perfect people, and all the powers
Be with them that bear fruit on earth :
Till the inner heart of man be one
With freedom, and the sovereign sun ;
And Time, in likeness of a guide,
Lead the Republic as a bride
Up to God's side.

COR CORDIUM.

O HEART of hearts, the chalice of love's fire,
Hid round with flowers and all the bounty of bloom;
O wonderful and perfect heart, for whom
The lyrist liberty made life a lyre ;
O heavenly heart, at whose most dear desire
Dead Love, living and singing, cleft his tomb,
And with him risen and regent in death's room
All day thy choral pulses rang full choir ;
O hearts whose beating blood was running song,
O sole thing sweeter than thine own songs were,
Help us for thy free love's sake to be free,
True for thy truth's sake, for thy strength's sake strong,
Till very liberty make clean and fair
The nursing earth as the sepulchral sea.

TIRESIAS.

PART I.

IT is an hour before the hour of dawn.
Set in mine hand my staff, and leave me here
Outside the hollow house that blind men fear,
More blind than I who live on life withdrawn,
And feel on eyes that see not but foresee
The shadow of death which clothes Antigone.

Here lay her living body that here lies
Dead, if man living know what thing is death,
If life be all made up of blood and breath,

And no sense be save as of ears and eyes.
But heart there is not, tongue there is not found,
To think or sing what verge hath life or bound.

In the beginning when the powers that made
The young child man a little loved him, seeing
His joy of life and fair face of his being,
And bland and laughing with the manchild played,
As friends they saw on our divine one day,
King Cadmus take to queen Harmonia.

The strength of soul that builds up as with hands,
Walls spiritual and towers and towns of thought
Which only fate, not force, can bring to naught,
Took then to wife the light of all men's lands,
War's child, and love's, most sweet and wise and strong.
Order of things and rule and guiding song.

It was long since : yea, even the sun that saw
Remembers hardly what was, nor how long ;
And now the wise heart of the worldly song
Is perished, and the holy hand of law
Can set no tune on time, nor help again
The power of thought to build up life for men.

Yea, surely are they now transformed or dead,
And sleep below this world, where no sun warms,
Or move about it now in formless forms
Incognizable, and all their lordship fled ;
And where they stood up singing, crawl and hiss
With fangs that kill behind their lips that kiss.

Yet though her marriage-garment, seeming fair,
Was dyed in sin and woven of jealousy
To turn their seed to poison, time shall see
The gods re-issue from them, and repair
Their broken stamp of godhead, and again
Thought and wise love sing words of law to men.

I, Tiresias the prophet, seeing in Thebes
Much evil, and the misery of men's hands
Who sow with fruitless wheat the stones and sands,

With fruitful thorns the fallows and warm glebes,
Bade their hands hold lest worse hap come to pass,
But which of you had heed of Tiresias ?

I am as Time's self in mine own wearied mind,
Whom the strong heavy-footed years have led
From night to night and dead men unto dead,
And from the blind hope to the memory blind ;
For each man's life is woven, as Time's life is,
Of blind young hopes and old blind memories.

I am a soul outside of death and birth.
I see before me and afterward I see,
O child, O corpse, the live dead face of thee,
Whose life and death are one thing upon earth
Where day kills night and night again kills day
And dies ; but where is that Harmonia ?

O all-beholden light not seen of me !
Air, and warm winds that under the sun's eye
Stretch your strong wings at morning ; and thou, sky,
Whose hollow circle engirdling earth and sea
All night the set stars limit, and all day
The moving sun remeasures ; ye, I say,—

Ye heights of hills, and thou Dircean spring
Inviolable, and ye towers that saw cast down
Seven kings keen-sighted toward your seven-faced town,
And quenched the red seed of one sightless king ;
And thou, for death less dreadful than for birth,
Whose wild leaves hide the horror of the earth,—

O mountain whereon gods made chase of kings,
Cithæon, thou that sawest on Pentheus dead
Fangs of a mother fasten, and wax red,
And satiate with a son thy swollen springs,
And heardst her cry fright all thine eyries' nests
Who gave death suck at sanguine-suckling breasts ;

Yea, and a grief more grievous, without name,
A curse too grievous for the name of grief,
Thou sawest, and heardst the rumor scare belief
Even unto death and madness, when the flame
Was lit whose ashes dropped about the pyre
That of two brethren made one sundering fire;

O bitter nurse, that on thine hard bare knees
Rear'dst for his fate the bloody-footed child
Whose hands should be more bloodily defiled
And the old blind feet walk wearier ways than these,
Whose seed, brought forth in darkness unto doom,
Should break as fire out of his mother's womb;

I bear you witness as ye bear to me,
Time, day, night, sun, stars, life, death, air, sea, earth,
And ye that round the human house of birth
Watch with veiled heads and weaponed hands, and see
Good things and evil, strengthless yet and dumb,
Sit in the clouds with cloudlike hours to come;

Ye forces without form and viewless powers
That have the keys of all our years in hold,
That prophesy too late with tongues of gold,
In a strange speech whose words are perished hours,
I witness to you what good things ye give
As ye to me what evil while I live.

What should I do to blame you, what to praise,
For floral hours and hours funereal?
What should I do to curse or bless at all
For winter-woven or summer-colored days?
Curse he that will, and bless you whoso can:
I have no common part in you with man.

I hear a springing water, whose quick sound
Makes softer the soft, sunless, patient air,
And the wind's hand is laid on my thin hair
Light as a lover's, and the grasses round
Have odors in them of green bloom and rain,
Sweet as the kiss wherewith sleep kisses pain.

I hear the low sound of the spring of time
Still beating as the low live throb of blood,
And where its waters gather head and flood
I hear change moving on them, and the chime
Across them of reverberate wings of hours
Sounding, and feel the future air of flowers.

The wind of change is soft as snow, and sweet
The sense thereof as roses in the sun,
The faint wind springing with the springs that run,
The dim sweet smell of flowering hopes, and heat
Of unbeholden sunrise ; yet how long
I know not, till the morning put forth song.

I prophesy of life, who live with death ;
Of joy, being sad ; of sunlight, who am blind ;
Of man, whose ways are alien from mankind
And his lips are not parted with man's breath :
I am a word out of the speechless years,
The tongue of time, that no man sleeps who hears.

I stand a shadow across the door of doom
Athwart the lintel of death's house, and wait ;
Nor quick nor dead, nor flexible by fate,
Nor quite of earth nor wholly of the tomb ;
A voice, a vision, light as fire or air,
Driven between days that shall be and that were.

I prophesy, with feet upon a grave,
Of death cast out, and life devouring death
As flame doth wood and stubble with a breath ;
Of freedom, though all manhood were one slave ;
Of truth, though all the world were liar ; of love,
That time nor hate can raze the witness of.

Life that was given for love's sake and his law's,
Their powers have no more power on : they divide
Spoils wrung from lust or wrath of man or pride,
And keen oblivion without pity or pause
Sets them on fire, and scatters them on air
Like ashes shaken from a suppliant's hair.

But life they lay no hand on; life once given
No force of theirs hath competence to take;
Life that was given for some divine thing's sake,
To mix the bitterness of earth with heaven,
Light with man's night, and music with his breath,
Dies not, but makes its living food of death.

I have seen this, who live where men are not,
In the high starless air of fruitful night,
On that serenest and obscurest height
Where dead and unborn things are one in thought,
And whence the live unconquerable springs
Feed full of force the torrents of new things.

I have seen this, who saw long since, being man,
As now I know not if indeed I be,
The fair bare body of Wisdom, good to see
And evil, whence my light and night began;
Light on the goal and darkness on the way,
Light all through night and darkness all through day.

Mother, that by that Pegasean spring,
Didst fold round in thine arms thy blinded son,
Weeping, "O holiest, what thing hast thou done,
What, to my child? woe's me that see the thing!
Is this thy love to me-ward, and hereof
Must I take sample how the gods can love?

"O child, thou hast seen indeed, poor child of mine,
The breasts and flanks of Pallas bare in sight,
But never shalt see more the dear sun's light;
O Helicon, how great a pay is thine
For some poor antelopes and wild-deer dead!
My child's eyes hast thou taken in their stead"—

Mother, thou knewest not what she had to give,
Thy goddess, though then angered, for mine eyes;
Fame and foreknowledge, and to be most wise,
And centuries of high-thoughted life to live,
And in mine hand this guiding staff to be
As eyesight to the feet of men that see.

Perchance I shall not die at all, nor pass
The general door and lintel of men dead,
Yet even the very tongue of wisdom said
What grace should come with death to Tiresias,
What special honor that god's hand accord
Who gathers all men's nations as their lord.

And sometimes when the secret eye of thought
Is changed with obscuration, and the sense
Aches with long pain of hollow prescience,
And fiery foresight with fore-suffering bought
Seems even to infect my spirit and consume,
Hunger and thirst come on me for the tomb.

I could be fain to drink my death, and sleep,
And no more wrapped about with bitter dreams
Talk with the stars and with the winds and streams
And with the inevitable years, and weep;
For how should he who communes with the years
Be sometime not a living spring of tears?

O child, that guided of thine only will
Didst set thy maiden foot against the gate
To strike it open ere thine hour of fate,
Antigone, men say not thou didst ill,
For love's sake and the reverence of his awe
Divinely dying, slain by mortal law;

For love is awful as immortal death.
And through thee surely hath thy brother won
Rest, out of sight of our world-weary sun,
And in the dead land where ye ghosts draw breath
A royal place and honor; so wast thou
Happy, though earth have hold of thee too now.

So hast thou life and name inviolable,
And joy it may be, sacred and severe,
Joy secret-souled beyond all hope or fear,
A monumental joy wherein to dwell
Secluse and silent, a selected state,
Serene possession of thy proper fate.

Thou art not dead as these are dead who live
Full of blind years, a sorrow-shaken kind,
Nor as these are am I the prophet blind ;
They have not life that have not heart to give
Life, nor have eyesight who lack heart to see
When to be not is better than to be.

O ye whom time but bears with for a span,
How long will ye be blind and dead, how long
Make your own souls part of your own soul's wrong ?
Son of the word of the most high gods, man,
Why wilt thou make thine hour of light and breath
Emptier of all but shame than very death ?

Fool, wilt thou live forever ? though thou care
With all thine heart for life to keep it fast,
Shall not thine hand forego it at the last ?
Lo, thy sure hour shall take thee by the hair
Sleeping, or when thou knowest not, or wouldst fly ;
And as men died much mightier, shalt thou die.

Yea, they are dead, men much more worth than thou ;
The savor of heroic lives that were,
Is it not mixed into thy common air ?
The sense of them is shed about thee now :
Feel not thy brows a wind blowing from far ?
Aches not thy forehead with a future star ?

The light that thou may'st make out of thy name
Is in the wind of this same hour that drives,
Blown within reach but once of all men's lives ;
And he that puts forth hand upon the flame
Shall have it for a garland on his head
To sign him for a king among the dead.

But these men that the lessening years behold,
Who sit the most part without flame or crown,
And brawl and sleep, and wear their life-days down

With joys and griefs ignobler than of old,
And care not if the better day shall be,—
Are these or art thou dead, Antigone?

PART II.

As when one wakes out of a waning dream,
And sees with instant eyes the naked thought
Whereof the vision as a web was wrought,
I saw beneath a heaven of cloud and gleam,
Ere yet the heart of the young sun waxed brave,
One like a prophet standing by a grave.

In the hoar heaven was hardly beam or breath,
And all the colored hills and fields were gray,
And the wind wandered seeking for the day,
And wailed as though he had found her done to death,
And this gray hour had built to bury her
The hollow twilight for a sepulchre.

But in my soul I saw as in a glass
A pale and living body full of grace
There lying, and over it the prophet's face
Fixed; and the face was not of Tiresias,
For such a starry fire was in his eyes
As though their light it was that made the skies.

Such eyes should God's have been when very love
Looked forth of them and set the sun aflame,
And such his lips that called the light by name
And bade the morning forth at sound thereof;
His face was sad and masterful as fate,
And like a star's his look compassionate.

Like a star's gazed on of sad eyes so long
It seems to yearn with pity, and all its fire
As a man's heart to tremble with desire
And heave as though the light would bring forth song;
Yet from his face flashed lightning on the land,
And like the thunder-bearer's was his hand.

The steepness of strange stairs had tired his feet,
And his lips yet seemed sick of that salt bread
Wherewith the lips of banishment are fed;
But nothing was there in the world so sweet
As the most bitter love, like God's own grace,
Wherewith he gazed on that fair buried face.

Grief and glad pride and passion and sharp shame,
Wrath and remembrance, faith and hope and hate,
And pitiless pity of days degenerate,
Where in his eyes as an incorporate flame
That burned about her, and the heart thereof
And central flower was very fire of love.

But all about her grave wherein she slept
Were noises of the wild wind-footed years
Whose footprints flying were full of blood and tears,
Shrieks as of Mænads on their hills that leapt
And yelled as beasts of ravin, and their meat
Was the rent flesh of their own sons to eat.

And fiery shadows passing with strange cries,
And sphinx-like shapes about the ruined lands,
And the red reek of parricidal hands
And intermixture of incestuous eyes,
And light as of that self-divided flame
Which made an end of the Cadmean name.

And I beheld again, and lo the grave,
And the bright body laid therein as dead,
And the same shadow across another head
That bowed down silent on that sleeping slave
Who was the lady of empire from her birth
And light of all the kingdoms of the earth.

Within the compass of the watcher's hand
All strengths of other men and divers powers
Were held at ease and gathered up as flowers;
His heart was as the heart of his whole land,
And at his feet as natural servants lay
Twilight and dawn and night and laboring day.

He was most awful of the sons of God.
Even now men seeing seemed at his lips to see
The trumpet of the judgment that should be,
And in his right hand terror for a rod,
And in the breath that made the mountains bow
The horned fire of Moses on his brow.
The strong wind of the coming of the Lord
Had blown as flame upon him, and brought down
On his bare head from heaven fire for a crown,
And fire was girt upon him as a sword
To smite and lighten, and on what ways he trod
There fell from him the shadow of a god.

Pale, with the whole world's judgment in his eyes,
He stood and saw the grief and shame endure
That he, though highest of angels, might not cure,
And the same sins done under the same skies,
And the same slaves to the same tyrants thrown,
And fain he would have slept, and fain been stone.

But with unslumbering eyes he watched the sleep
That sealed her sons whose eyes were suns of old;
And the night shut and opened, and behold,
The same grave where those prophets came to weep,
But she that lay therein had moved and stirred,
And where those twain had watched her stood a third.

The tripled rhyme that closed in Paradise
With Love's name sealing up its starry speech;
The tripled might of hand that found in reach
All crowns beheld far off of all men's eyes,
Song, color, carven wonders of live stone,—
These were not, but the very soul alone.

The living spirit, the good gift of grace,
The faith which takes of its own blood to give
That the dead veins of buried hope may live,
Came on her sleeping, face to naked face,
And from a soul more sweet than all the south
Breathed love upon her sealed and breathless mouth,

Between her lips the breath was blown as fire,
And through her flushed veins leapt the liquid life,
And with sore passion and ambiguous strife
The new birth rent her and the new desire,
The will to live, the competence to be,
The sense to hearken, and the soul to see.

And the third prophet standing by her grave
Stretched forth his hand, and touched her; and her eyes
Opened as sudden suns in heaven might rise,
And her soul caught from his the faith to save;
Faith above creeds, faith beyond records, born
Of the pure, naked, fruitful, awful morn.

For in the daybreak now that night was dead
The light, the shadow, the delight, the pain,
The purpose and the passion of those twain,
Seemed gathered on that third prophetic head;
And all their crowns were as one crown, and one
His face with her face in the living sun.

For even with that communion of their eyes
His whole soul passed into her, and made her strong;
And all the sounds and shows of shame and wrong,
The hand that slays, the lip that mocks and lies,
Temples and thrones that yet men seem to see,—
Are these dead, or art thou dead, Italy?

AN APPEAL.

I.

Art thou indeed among these,
Thou of the tyrannous crew,
The kingdoms fed upon blood,
O queen from of old of the seas,
England,—art thou of them too
That drink of the poisonous flood,
That hide under poisonous trees?

II.

Nay, thy name from of old,
Mother, was pure, or we dreamed;
Purer we held thee than this,
Purer fain would we hold;
So goodly a glory it seemed,
A fame so bounteous of bliss,
So more precious than gold.

III.

A praise so sweet in our ears,
That thou in the tempest of things
As a rock for a refuge shouldst stand,
In the blood-red river of tears
Poured forth for the triumph of kings
A safeguard, a sheltering land,
In the thunder and torrent of years.

IV.

Strangers came gladly to thee,
Exiles, chosen of men,
Safe for thy sake in thy shade,
Sat down at thy feet and were free.
So men spake of thee then:
Now shall their speaking be stayed?
Ah, so let it not be!

V.

Not for revenge or affright,
Pride, or a tyrannous lust,
Cast from thee the crown of thy praise.
Mercy was thine in thy might;
Strong when thou wert, thou wert just;
Now, in the wrong-doing days,
Cleave thou, thou at least, to the right.

VI.

How should one charge thee, how sway,
Save by the memories that were?
Not thy gold, nor the strength of thy ships,

Nor the might of thine armies at bay,
Made thee, mother, most fair ;
But a word from republican lips
Said in thy name, in thy day.

VII.

Hast thou said it, and hast thou forgot ?
Is thy praise in thine ears as a scoff ?
Blood of men guiltless was shed,
Children, and souls without spot,
Shed, but in places far off :
Let slaughter no more be, said
Milton ; and slaughter was not.

VIII.

Was it not said of thee too,
Now, but now, by thy foes,
By the slaves that had slain their France,
And thee would slay as they slew—
" Down with her walls that enclose
Freemen that eye us askance,
Fugitives, men that are true ! "

IX.

This was thy praise or thy blame,
From bondsman or freeman,—to be
Pure from pollution of slaves,
Clean of their sins, and thy name
Bloodless, innocent, free :
Now if thou be not, thy waves
Wash not from off thee thy shame.

X.

Freeman he is not, but slave,
Whoso in fear for the state
Cries for surety of blood,
Help of gibbet and grave ;
Neither is any land great
Whom, in her fear-stricken mood,
These things only can save.

XI.

Lo ! how fair from afar,
Taintless of tyranny, stands
Thy mighty daughter, for years
Who trod the winepress of war,—
Shines with immaculate hands ;
Slays not a foe, neither fears ;
Stains not peace with a scar.

XII.

Be not as tyrant or slave,
England ; be not as these,
Thou that wert other than they.
Stretch out thine hand, but to save ;
Put forth thy strength, and release :
Lest there arise, if thou slay,
Thy shame as a ghost from the grave.

Nov. 20, 1867.

PERINDE AC CADAVER.

In a vision Liberty stood
By the childless charm-stricken bed
Where, barren of glory and good,
Knowing naught if she would not or would,
England slept with her dead.

Her face that the foam had whitened,
Her hands that were strong to strive,
Her eyes whence battle had lightened,
Over all was a drawn shroud tightened
To bind her asleep and alive.

She turned and laughed in her dream,
With gray lips arid and cold :
She saw not the face as a beam
Burn on her, but only a gleam
Through her sleep as of new-stamped gold.

But the goddess, with terrible tears
In the light of her down-drawn eyes,
Spake fire in the dull sealed ears :
"Thou, sick with slumbers and fears,
Wilt thou sleep now indeed, or arise ?

"With dreams, and with words, and with light
Memories and empty desires,
Thou hast wrapped thyself round all night:
Thou hast shut up thine heart from the right,
And warmed thee at burnt-out fires.

"Yet once, if I smote at thy gate,
Thy sons would sleep not, but heard:
O thou that wast found so great,
Art thou smitten with folly or fate,
That thy sons have forgotten my word?

"O Cromwell's mother, O breast
That suckled Milton! thy name
That was beautiful then, that was blest,
Is it wholly discrowned and deprest,
Trodden under by sloth into shame?

"Why wilt thou hate me and die?
For none can hate me and live.
What ill have I done to thee? Why
Wilt thou turn from me fighting, and fly,
Who would follow thy feet and forgive?

"Thou hast seen me stricken, and said,
What is it to me? I am strong:
Thou hast seen me bowed down on my dead,
And laughed, and lifted thine head,
And washed thine hands of my wrong.

"Thou has put out the soul of thy sight:
Thou hast sought to my foemen as friend,
To my traitors that kiss me and smite,
To the kingdoms and empires of night
That begin with the darkness, and end.

"Turn thee, awaken, arise,
With the light that is risen on the lands,
With the change of the fresh-colored skies:
Set thine eyes on mine eyes,
Lay thy hands in my hands."

She moved and mourned as she heard,
Sighed, and shifted her place,
As the wells of her slumber were stirred
By the music and wind of the word,
Then turned, and covered her face.

"Ah!" she said in her sleep,
"Is my work not done with, and done?
Is there corn for my sickle to reap?
And strange is the pathway, and steep,
And sharp overhead is the sun.

"I have done thee service enough,
Loved thee enough in my day:
Now nor hatred nor love
Nor hardly remembrance thereof
Lives in me to lighten my way.

"And is it not well with us here?
Is change as good as is rest?
What hope should move me, or fear
That eye should open or ear,
Who have long since won what is best?

"Where among us are such things
As turn men's hearts into hell?
Have we not queens without stings,
Scotched princes, and fangless kings?
Yea," she said, "we are well.

"We have filed the teeth of the snake
Monarchy; how should it bite?
Should the slippery slow thing wake,
It will not sting for my sake;
Yea," she said, "I do right."

So spake she, drunken with dreams,
Mad; but again in her ears
A voice as of storm-swelled streams
Spake: "No brave shame then redeems
Thy lusts of sloth and thy fears?

"Thy poor lies slain of thine hands,
Their starved limbs rot in thy sight;
As a shadow the ghost of thee stands
Among men living and lands,
And stirs not leftward or right.

"Freeman he is not, but slave,
Who stands not, out on my side;
His own hand hollows his grave,
Nor strength is in me to save
Where strength is none to abide.

"Time shall tread on his name
That was written for honor of old,
Who hath taken in change for fame
Dust, and silver, and shame,
Ashes, and iron, and gold."

THE OBLATION.

Ask nothing more of me, sweet;
All I can give you, I give.
Heart of my heart, were it more,
More would be laid at your feet;
Love that should help you to live,
Song that should spur you to soar.

All things were nothing to give,
Once to have sense of you more,
Touch you and taste of you, sweet,
Think you and breathe you, and live,
Swept of your wings as they soar,
Trodden by chance of your feet.

I that have love and no more
Give you but love of you, sweet:
He that hath more, let him give;
He that hath wings, let him soar;
Mine is the heart at your feet
Here, that must love you to live.

A SONG OF ITALY.

Upon a windy night of stars that fell
  At the wind's spoken spell,
Swept with sharp strokes of agonizing light
  From the clear gulf of night,
Between the fixed and fallen glories one
  Against my vision shone,
More fair and fearful and divine than they
  That measure night and day,
And worthier worship ; and within mine eyes
  The formless folded skies
Took shape and were unfolded like as flowers.
  And I beheld the hours
As maidens, and the days as laboring men,
  And the soft nights again
As wearied women to their own souls wed,
  And ages as the dead.
And over these living, and them that died,
  From one to the other side
A lordlier light than comes of earth or air
  Made the world's future fair.
A woman like to love in face, but not
  A thing of transient lot ;
And like to hope, but having hold on truth ;
  And like to joy or youth,
Save that upon the rock her feet were set ;
  And like what men forget,
Faith, innocence, high thought, laborious peace,—
  And yet like none of these,
Being not as these are mortal, but with eyes
  That sounded the deep skies,
And clove like wings or arrows their clear way
  Through night and dawn and day,—
So fair a presence over star and sun
  Stood, making these as one.
For in the shadow of her shape were all
  Darkened and held in thrall,
So mightier rose she past them ; and I felt
  Whose form, whose likeness knelt
With covered hair and face, and clasped her knees ;
  And knew the first of these

Was Freedom, and the second Italy.
And what sad words said she
For mine own grief I knew not, nor had heart
Therewith to bear my part
And set my songs to sorrow ; nor to hear
How tear by sacred tear
Fell from her eyes as flowers or notes that fall
In some slain feaster's hall
Where in mid music and melodious breath
Men singing have seen death.
So fair, so lost, so sweet, she knelt ; or so
In our lost eyes below
Seemed to us sorrowing ; and her speech being said,
Fell, as one who falls dead.
And for a little she too wept, who stood
Above the dust and blood
And thrones and troubles of the world ; then spake,
As who bids dead men wake :—

" Because the years were heavy on thy head ;
Because dead things are dead ;
Because thy chosen on hillside, city and plain
Are shed as drops of rain ;
Because all earth was black, all heaven was blind,
And we cast out of mind ;
Because men wept, saying *Freedom*, knowing of thee,
Child, that thou wast not free :
Because wherever blood was not shame was
Where thy pure foot did pass ;
Because on Promethean rocks distent
Thee fouler eagles rent ;
Because a serpent stains with slime and foam
This that is not thy Rome ;
Child of my womb, whose limbs were made in me,
Have I forgotten thee ?
In all thy dreams through all these years on wing,
Hast thou dreamed such a thing ?
The mortal mother-bird out-soars her nest,
The child outgrows the breast ;
But suns as stars shall fall from heaven and cease,
Ere we twain be as these :

Yea, utmost skies forget their utmost sun,
Ere we twain be not one.
My lesser jewels sewn on skirt and hem,
I have no heed of them
Obscured and flawed by sloth or craft or power ;
But thou, that wast my flower,
The blossom bound between my brows, and worn
In sight of even and morn
From the last ember of the flameless west
To the dawn's baring breast—
I were not Freedom if thou wert not free,
Nor thou wert Italy.
O mystic rose ingrained with blood, impearled
With tears of all the world !
The torpor of their blind brute-ridden trance
Kills England and chills France ;
And Spain sobs hard through strangling blood ; and snows
Hide the huge eastern woes.
But thou, twin-born with morning, nursed of noon,
And blessed of star and moon !
What shall avail to assail thee any more,
From sacred shore to shore ?
Have Time and Love not knelt down at thy feet,
Thy sore, thy soiled, thy sweet,
Fresh from the flints and mire of murderous ways
And dust of travelling days ?
Hath Time not kissed them, Love not washed them fair
And wiped with tears and hair ?
Though God forget thee, I will not forget ;
Though heaven and earth be set
Against thee, O unconquerable child,
Abused, abased, reviled,
Lift thou not less from no funereal bed
Thine undishonored head ;
Love thou not less, by lips of thine once prest,
This my now barren breast ;
Seek thou not less, being well assured thereof,
O child, my latest love.
For now the barren bosom shall bear fruit,
Songs leap from lips long mute,
And with my milk the mouths of nations fed
Again be glad and red

That were worn white with hunger and sorrow and thirst ;
And thou, most fair and first,
Thou whose warm hands and sweet live lips I feel
Upon me for a seal,
Thou whose least looks, whose smiles and little sighs,
Whose passionate pure eyes,
Whose dear fair limbs that neither bonds could bruise
Nor hate of men misuse,
Whose flower-like breath and bosom, O my child,
O mine and undefiled,
Fill with such tears as burn like bitter wine
These mother's eyes of mine,
Thrill with huge passions and primeval pains
The fulness of my veins.
O sweetest head seen higher than any stands,
I touch thee with mine hands,
I lay my lips upon thee, O thou most sweet,
To lift thee on thy feet,
And with the fire of mine to fill thine eyes ;
I say unto thee, Arise."

She ceased, and heaven was full of flame and sound,
And earth's old limbs unbound
Shone and waxed warm with fiery dew and seed
Shed through her at this her need :
And highest in heaven, a mother and full of grace,
With no more covered face,
With no more lifted hands and bended knees,
Rose, as from sacred seas
Love, when old time was full of plenteous springs,
That fairest-born of things,
The land that holds the rest in tender thrall
For love's sake in them all,
That binds with words and holds with eyes and hands
All hearts in all men's lands.
So died the dream whence rose the live desire
That here takes form and fire,
A spirit from the splendid grave of sleep
Risen, that ye should not weep,—
Should not weep more nor ever, O ye that hear,
And ever have held her dear,

Seeing now indeed she weeps not who wept sore,
And sleeps not any more.
Hearken ye towards her, O people, exalt your eyes;
Is this a thing that dies?

Italia! by the passion of the pain
That bent and rent thy chain;
Italia! by the breaking of the bands,
The shaking of the lands;
Beloved, O men's mother, O men's queen,
Arise, appear, be seen!
Arise, array thyself in manifold
Queen's raiment of wrought gold;
With girdles of green freedom, and with red
Roses, and white snow shed
Above the flush and frondage of the hills
That all thy deep dawn fills
And all thy clear night veils and warms with wings
Spread till the morning sings;
The rose of resurrection, and the bright
Breast lavish of the light,
The lady lily like the snowy sky
Ere the stars wholly die;
As red as blood, and whiter than a wave,
Flowers grown as from thy grave,
From the green fruitful grass in May-time hot,
Thy grave, where thou art not.
Gather the grass and weave, in sacred sign
Of the ancient earth divine,
The holy heart of things, the seed of birth,
The mystical warm earth.
O thou her flower of flowers, with treble braid
Be thy sweet head arrayed,
In witness of her mighty motherhood
Who bore thee and found thee good,
Her fairest-born of children, on whose head
Her green and white and red
Are hope and light and life, inviolate
Of any latter fate.
Fly, O our flag, through deep Italian air,
Above the flags that were,
The dusty shreds of shameful battle-flags
Trampled and rent in rags,

As withering woods in autumn's bitterest breath
Yellow, and black as death;
Black as crushed worms that sicken in the sense,
And yellow as pestilence.
Fly, green as summer and red as dawn and white
As the live heart of light,
The blind bright womb of color unborn, that brings
Forth all fair forms of things,
As freedom all fair forms of nations dyed
In divers-colored pride.
Fly fleet as wind on every wind that blows
Between her seas and snows,
From Alpine white, from Tuscan green, and where
Vesuvius reddens air.
Fly! and let all men see it, and all kings wail,
And priests wax faint and pale,
And the cold hordes that moan in misty places
And the funereal races
And the sick serfs of lands that wait and wane
See thee and hate thee in vain.
In the clear laughter of all winds and waves,
In the blown grass of graves,
In the long sound of fluctuant boughs of trees,
In the broad breath of seas,
Bid the sound of thy flying folds be heard;
And as a spoken word
Full of that fair god and that merciless
Who rends the Pythoness,
So be the sound and so the fire that saith
She feels her ancient breath
And the old blood move in her immortal veins.

Strange travail and strong pains,
Our mother, hast thou borne these many years
While thy pure blood and tears
Mixed with the Tyrrhene and the Adrian sea.
Light things were said of thee,
As of one buried deep among the dead;
Yea, she hath been, they said,
She was when time was younger, and is not;
The very cerecloths rot
That flutter in the dusty wind of death,
Not moving with her breath;

Far seasons and forgotten years enfold
Her dead corpse old and cold
With many windy winters and pale springs:
She is none of this world's things.
Though her dead head like a live garland wear
The golden-growing hair
That flows over her breast down to her feet,
Dead queens, whose life was sweet
In sight of all men living, have been found
So cold, so clad, so crowned,
With all things faded and with one thing fair,
Their old immortal hair,
When flesh and bone turned dust at touch of day:
And she is dead as they.

So men said sadly, mocking; so the slave,
Whose life was his soul's grave;
So, pale or red with change of fast and feast,
The sanguine-sandalled priest;
So the Austrian, when his fortune came to flood,
And the warm wave was blood;
With wings that widened and with beak that smote,
So shrieked through either throat
From the hot horror of its northern nest
That double-headed pest;
So, triple-crowned with fear and fraud and shame,
He of whom treason came,
The herdsman of the Gadarean swine;
So all his ravening kine,
Made fat with poisonous pasture: so not we,
Mother, beholding thee.
Make answer, O the crown of all our slain,
Ye that were one, being twain,
Twain brethren, twin-born to the second birth,
Chosen out of all our earth
To be the prophesying stars that say
How hard is night on day,
Stars in serene and sudden heaven re-risen
Before the sun break prison
And ere the moon be wasted; fair first flowers
In that red wreath of ours
Woven with the lives of all whose lives were shed
To crown their mother's head

With leaves of civic cypress and thick yew,
Till the olive bind it too,
Olive and laurel and all loftier leaves
That victory wears or weaves
At her fair feet for her beloved brow;
Hear, for she too hears now,
O Pisacane, from Calabrian sands;
O all heroic hands
Close on the sword-hilt, hands of all her dead;
O many a holy head,
Bowed for her sake even to her reddening dust;
O chosen, O pure and just,
Who counted for a small thing life's estate,
And died, and made it great;
Ye whose names mix with all her memories; ye
Who rather chose to see
Death, than our more intolerable things;
Thou whose name withers kings,
Agesilao; thou too, O chiefliest thou,
The slayer of splendid brow,
Laid where the lying lips of fear deride
The foiled tyrannicide,
Foiled, fallen, slain, scorned, and happy; being in fame,
Felice, like thy name,
Not like thy fortune; father of the fight,
Having in hand our light.
Ah, happy! for that sudden-swerving hand
Flung light on all thy land,
Yea, lit blind France with compulsory ray,
Driven down a righteous way;
Ah, happiest! for from thee the wars began,
From thee the fresh springs ran;
From thee the lady land that queens the earth
Gat as she gave new birth.
O sweet mute mouths, O all fair dead of ours,
Fair in her eyes as flowers,
Fair without feature, vocal without voice,
Strong without strength, rejoice!
Hear it with ears that hear not, and on eyes
That see not let it rise,
Rise as a sundawn; be it as dew that drips
On dumb and dusty lips;

Eyes have ye not, and see it; neither ears,
And there is none but hears.
This is the same for whom ye bled and wept;
She was not dead, but slept.
This is that very Italy which was
And is and shall not pass.

But thou though all were not well done,
O chief,
Must thou take shame or grief?
Because one man is not as thou or ten,
Must thou take shame for men?
Because the supreme sunrise is not yet,
Is the young dew not wet?
Will thou not yet abide a little while,
Soul without fear or guile,
Mazzini, O our prophet, O our priest,
A little while at least!
A little hour of doubt and of control,
Sustain thy sacred soul,
Withhold thine heart, our father, but an hour;
Is it not here, the flower,
Is it not blown and fragrant from the root,
And shall not yet be the fruit?
Thy children, even thy people thou hast made,
Thine, with thy words arrayed,
Clothed with thy thoughts and girt with thy desires,
Yearn up toward thee as fires.
Art thou not father, O father, of all these?
From thine own Genoese
To where of nights the lower extreme lagune
Feels its Venetian moon,
Nor suckling's mouth nor mother's breast set free
But hath that grace through thee.
The milk of life on death's unnatural brink
Thou gavest them to drink,
The natural milk of freedom; and again
They drank, and they were men.
The wine and honey of freedom and of faith
They drank, and cast off death.
Bear with them now; thou art holier: yet endure,
Till they as thou be pure.

Their swords at least that stemmed half Austria's tide
Bade all its bulk divide ;
Else, though fate bade them for a breath's space fall,
She had not fallen at all.
Not by their hands they made time's promise true ;
Not by their hands, but through.
Nor on Custoza ran their blood to waste,
Nor fell their fame defaced
Whom stormiest Adria with tumultuous tides
Whirles undersea and hides.
Not his, who from the sudden-settling deck
Looked over death and wreck
To where the mother's bosom shone, who smiled
As he, so dying, her child ;
For he smiled surely, dying, to mix his death
With her memorial breath ;
Smiled, being most sure of her, that in no wise,
Die whoso will, she dies :
And she smiled surely, fair and far above,
Wept not, but smiled for love.
Thou too, O splendor of the sudden sword
That drove the crews abhorred
From Naples and the siren-footed strand,
Flash from thy master's hand,
Shine from the middle summer of the seas
To the old Æolides,
Outshine their fiery fumes of burning night,
Sword, with thy midday light ;
Flame as a beacon from the Tyrrhene foam
To the rent heart of Rome,
From the island of her lover and thy lord,
Her savior and her sword.
In the fierce year of failure and of fame,
Art thou not yet the same
That wast as lightning swifter than all wings
In the blind face of kings ?
When priests took counsel to devise despair,
And princes to forswear,
She clasped thee, O her sword and flag-bearer
And staff and shield to her,
O Garibaldi ! need was hers and grief,
Of thee and of the chief,

And of another girt in arms to stand
As good of hope and hand,
As high of soul and happy, albeit indeed
The heart should burn and bleed,
So but the spirit shake not nor the breast
Swerve, but abide its rest,
As theirs did and as thine, though ruin clomb
The highest wall of Rome,
Though treason stained and spilt her lustral water,
And slaves led slaves to slaughter,
And priests, praying and slaying, watched them pass
From a strange France, alas !
That was not freedom ; yet when these were past
Thy sword and thou stood fast,
Till new men seeing thee where Sicilian waves
Hear now no sound of slaves,
And where thy sacred blood is fragrant still
Upon the Bitter Hill,
Seeing by that blood one country saved and stained,
Less loved thee crowned than chained,
And less now only than the chief : for he,
Father of Italy,
Upbore in holy hands the babe new-born
Through loss and sorrow and scorn,
Of no man led, of many men reviled ;
Till, lo ! the new-born child
Gone from between his hands, and in its place,
Lo, the fair mother's face.
Blessed is he of all men, being in one
As father to her and son,
Blessed of all men living, that he found
Her weak limbs bared and bound,
And in his arms and in his bosom bore,
And as a garment wore
Her weight of want, and as a royal dress
Put on her weariness.
As in faith's hoariest histories men read,
The strong man bore at need
Through roaring rapids when all heaven was wild
The likeness of a child
That still waxed greater and heavier as he trod,
And altered, and was God.

Praise him, O winds that move the molten air,
O light of days that were,
And light of days that shall be ; land and sea,
And heaven and Italy :
Praise him, O storm and summer, shore and wave,
O skies and every grave ;
O weeping hopes, O memories beyond tears,
O many and murmuring years,
O sounds far off in time and visions far,
O sorrow with thy star,
And joy with all thy beacons ; ye that mourn,
And ye whose light is born ;
O fallen faces, and O souls arisen,
Praise him from tomb and prison,
Praise him from heaven and sunlight ; and ye floods,
And windy waves of woods ;
Ye valleys and wild vineyards, ye lit lakes
And happier hillside brakes,
Untrampled by the accursed feet that trod
Fields golden from their god,
Fields of their god forsaken, whereof none
Sees his face in the sun,
Hears his voice from the floweriest wildernesses ;
And, barren of his tresses,
Ye bays unplucked and laurels unintwined,
That no men break or bind,
And myrtles long forgetful of the sword,
And olives unadored,
Wisdom and love, white hands that save and slay,
Praise him ; and ye as they,
Praise him, O gracious might of dews and rains
That feed the purple plains,
O sacred sunbeams bright as bare steel drawn,
O cloud and fire and dawn ;
Red hills of flame, white Alps, green Apennines,
Banners of blowing pines,
Standards of stormy snows, flags of light leaves,
Three wherewith Freedom weaves
One ensign that once woven and once unfurled
Makes day of all a world,
Makes blind their eyes who knew not, and outbraves
The waste of iron waves ;

Ye fields of yellow fulness, ye fresh fountains,
And mists of many mountains ;
Ye moons and seasons, and ye days and nights ;
Ye starry-headed heights,
And gorges melting sunward from the snow,
And all strong streams that flow,
Tender as tears, and fair as faith, and pure
As hearts made sad and sure
At once by many sufferings and one love ;
O mystic deathless dove
Held to the heart of earth and in her hands
Cherished, O lily of lands,
White rose of time, dear dream of praises past,—
For such as these thou wast,
That art as eagles setting to the sun,
As fawns that leap and run,
As a sword carven with keen floral gold,
Sword for an armed god's hold,
Flower for a crowned god's forehead,—O our land,
Reach forth thine holiest hand,
O mother of many sons and memories,
Stretch out thine hand to his
That raised and gave thee life to run and leap
When thou wast full of sleep,
That touched and stung thee with young blood and breath
When thou wast hard on death.
Praise him, O all her cities and her crowns,
Her towers and thrones of towns ;
O noblest Brescia, scarred from foot to head
And breast-deep in the dead,
Praise him from all the glories of thy graves
That yellow Mela laves
With gentle and golden water, whose fair flood
Ran wider with thy blood :
Praise him, O born of that heroic breast,
O nursed thereat and blest,
Verona, fairer than thy mother fair,
But not more brave to bear :
Praise him, O Milan, whose imperial tread
Bruised once the German head ;
Whose might, by northern swords left desolate,
Set foot on fear and fate :

Praise him, O long mute mouth of melodies,
Mantua, with louder keys,
With mightier chords of music even than rolled
From the large harps of old,
When thy sweet singer of golden throat and tongue,
Praising his tyrant, sung;
Though now thou sing not as of other days,
Learn late a better praise.
Not with the sick sweet lips of slaves that sing,
Praise thou no priest or king,
No brow-bound laurel of discolored leaf,
But him, the crownless chief.
Praise him, O star of sun-forgotten times,
Among their creeds and crimes
That wast a fire of witness in the night,
Padua, the wise men's light:
Praise him, O sacred Venice, and the sea
That now exults through thee,
Full of the mighty morning and the sun,
Free of things dead and done;
Praise him from all the years of thy great grief,
That shook thee like a leaf
With winds and snows of torment, rain that fell
Red as the rains of hell,
Storms of black thunder and of yellow flame,
And all ill things but shame;
Praise him with all thy holy heart and strength;
Through thy walls' breadth and length
Praise him with all thy people, that their voice
Bid the strong soul rejoice,
The fair clear supreme spirit beyond stain,
Pure as the depth of pain,
High as the head of suffering, and secure
As all things that endure.
More than thy blind lord of an hundred years
Whose name our memory hears,
Home-bound from harbors of the Byzantine
Made tributary of thine,
Praise him who gave no gifts from over-sea,
But gave thyself to thee.
O mother Genoa, through all years that run,
More than that other son,

Who first beyond the seals of sunset prest
  Even to the unfooted west,
Whose black-blown flag scared from their sheltering seas
  The unknown Atlantides,
And as flame climbs through cloud and vapor clomb
  Through streams of storm and foam,
Till half in sight they saw land heave and swim,—
  More than this man praise him.
One found a world new-born from virgin sea;
  And one found Italy.
O heavenliest Florence, from the mouths of flowers
  Fed by melodious hours,
From each sweet mouth that kisses light and air,
  Thou whom thy fate made fair,
As a bound vine or any flowering tree,
  Praise him who made thee free.
For no grape-gatherers trampling out the wine
  Tread thee, the fairest vine;
For no man binds thee, no man bruises, none
  Does with thee as these have done.
From where spring hears loud through her long lit vales
  Triumphant nightingales,
In many a fold of fiery foliage hidden,
  Withheld as things forbidden,
But clamorous with innumerable delight
  In May's red, green, and white,
In the far-floated standard of the spring,
  That bids men also sing,
Our flower of flags, our witness that we are free,
  Our lamp for land and sea;
From where Majano feels through corn and vine,
  Spring move and melt as wine,
And Fiesole's embracing arms enclose
  The immeasurable rose;
From hillsides plumed with pine, and heights wind-worn
  That feel the refluent morn,
Or where the moon's face warm and passionate
  Burns, and men's hearts grow great,
And the swoln eyelids labor with sweet tears,
  And in their burning ears

Sound throbs like flame, and in their eyes new light
Kindles the trembling night;
From faint illumined fields and starry valleys
Wherefrom the hill-wind sallies,
From Vallombrosa, from Valdarno raise
One Tuscan tune of praise.
O lordly city of the field of death,
Praise him with equal breath,
From sleeping streets and gardens, and the stream
That threads them as a dream
Threads without light the unravelled ways of sleep
With eyes that smile or weep;
From the sweet sombre beauty of wave and wall
That fades and does not fall;
From colored domes and cloisters fair with fame,
Praise thou and thine his name.
Thou too, O little laurelled town of towers,
Clothed with the flame of flowers,
From windy ramparts girdled with young gold,
From thy sweet hillside fold
Of wallflowers and the acacia's belted bloom
And every blowing plume,
Halls that saw Dante speaking, chapels fair
As the outer hills and air,
Praise him who feeds the fire that Dante fed,
Our highest heroic head,
Whose eyes behold through floated cloud and flame
The maiden face of fame
Like April's in Valdelsa; fair as flowers,
And patient as the hours;
Sad with slow sense of time, and bright with faith
That levels life and death;
The final fame, that with a foot sublime
Treads down reluctant time;
The fame that waits and watches and is wise,
A virgin with chaste eyes,
A goddess who takes hands with great men's grief;
Praise her, and him, our chief.
Praise him, O Siena, and thou her deep green spring,
O Fonte Branda, sing:
Shout from the red clefts of thy fiery crags,
Shake out thy flying flags

In the long wind that streams from hill to hill ;
Bid thy full music fill
The desolate red waste of sunset air
And fields the old time saw fair,
But now the hours ring void through ruined lands,
Wild work of mortal hands ;
Yet through thy dead Maremma let his name
Take flight and pass in flame,
And the red ruin of disastrous hours
Shall quicken into flowers.
Praise him, O fiery child of sun and sea,
Naples, who bade thee be ;
For till he sent the swords that scourge and save,
Thou wast not, but thy grave.
But more than all these praise him and give thanks,
Thou, from thy Tiber's banks,
From all thine hills and from thy supreme dome,—
Praise him, O risen Rome !
Let all thy children cities at thy knee
Lift up their voice with thee,
Saying, " For thy love's sake and our perished grief
We laud thee, O our chief ! "
Saying, " For thine hand and help when hope was dead
We thank thee, O our head ! "
Saying, " For thy voice and face within our sight
We bless thee, O our light ;
For waters cleansing us from days defiled
We praise thee, O our child ! "

So with an hundred cities' mouths in one
Praising thy supreme son,
Son of thy sorrow, O mother, O maid and mother,
Our queen, who serve none other,
Our lady of pity and mercy, and full of grace,
Turn otherwhere thy face,
Turn for a little and look what things are these
Now fallen before thy knees ;
Turn upon them thine eyes who hated thee,
Behold what things they be,
Italia : these are stubble that were steel,
Dust, or a turning wheel ;

As leaves, as snow, as sand, that were so strong ;
And howl, for all their song,
And wail, for all their wisdom ; they that were
So great, they are all stript bare ;
They are all made empty of beauty, and all abhorred ;
They are shivered, and their sword ;
They are slain who slew, they are heartless who were wise ;
Yea, turn on these thine eyes,
O thou, soliciting with soul sublime
The obscure soul of time,
Thou, with the wounds thy holy body bears
From broken swords of theirs,
Thou, with the sweet swoln eyelids that have bled
Tears for thy thousands dead,
And upon these, whose swords drank up like dew
The sons of thine they slew,
These, whose each gun blasted with murdering mouth
Live flowers of thy fair south,
These, whose least evil told in alien ears
Turned men's whole blood to tears,
These, whose least sin remembered for pure shame
Turned all those tears to flame,
Even upon these, when breaks the extreme blow
And all the world cries woe,
When heaven reluctant rains long-suffering fire
On these and their desire,
When his wind shakes them and his waters whelm
Who rent thy robe and realm,
When they that poured thy dear blood forth as wine
Pour forth their own for thine,
On these, on these have mercy ; not in hate,
But full of sacred fate,
Strong from the shrine and splendid from the god,
Smite, with no second rod.
Because they spared not, do thou rather spare :
Be not one thing they were.
Let not one tongue of theirs who hate thee say
That thou wast even as they.
Because their hands were bloody, be thine white ;
Show light where they shed night :
Because they are foul, be thou the rather pure ;
Because they are feeble, endure ;

Because they had no pity, have thou pity.

And thou, O supreme city,
O priestless Rome that shalt be, take in trust
Their names, their deeds, their dust,
Who held life less than thou wert; be the least
To thee indeed a priest,
Priest and burnt-offering and blood-sacrifice
Given without prayer or price,
A holier immolation than men wist,
A costlier eucharist,
A sacrament more saving; bend thine head
Above these many dead
Once, and salute with thine eternal eyes
Their lowest head that lies.
Speak from thy lips of immemorial speech
If but one word for each.
Kiss but one kiss on each thy dead son's mouth
Fallen dumb or north or south;
And laying but once thine hand on brow and breast,
Bless them, through whom thou art blest.
And saying in ears of these thy dead "Well done,"
Shall they not hear, "O son?"
And bowing thy face to theirs made pale for thee,
Shall the shut eyes not see?
Yea, through the hollow-hearted world of death,
As light, as blood, as breath,
Shall there not flash and flow the fiery sense,
The pulse of prescience?
Shall not these know as in times overpast
Thee loftiest to the last?
For times and wars shall change, kingdoms and creeds,
And dreams of men, and deeds;
Earth shall grow gray with all her golden things,
Pale peoples and hoar kings;
But though her thrones and towers of nations fall,
Death has no part in all;
In the air, nor in the imperishable sea,
Nor heaven, nor truth, nor thee.
Yea, let all sceptre-stricken nations lie,
But live thou though they die;
Let their flags fade as flowers that storm can mar,
But thine be like a star;

Let England's, if it float not for men free,
Fall, and forget the sea ;
Let France's, if it shadow a hateful head,
Drop as a leaf drops dead ;
Thine let what storm soever smite the rest
Smite as it seems him best ;
Thine let the wind that can, by sea or land,
Wrest from thy banner-hand.
Die they in whom dies freedom, die and cease,
Though the world weep for these ;
Live thou, and love and lift when these lie dead
The green and white and red.

O our Republic that shalt bind in bands
The kingdomless far lands,
And link the chainless ages ; thou that wast
With England ere she past
Among the faded nations, and shalt be
Again, when sea to sea
Calls through the wind and light of morning time,
And throneless clime to clime
Makes antiphonal answer ; thou that art
Where one man's perfect heart
Burns, one man's brow is brightened for thy sake,
Thine, strong to make or break ;
O fair Republic hallowing with stretched hands
The limitless free lands,
When all men's heads for love, not fear, bow down
To thy sole royal crown,
As thou to freedom ; when man's life smells sweet,
And at thy bright swift feet
A bloodless and a bondless world is laid ;
Then, when thy men are made,
Let these indeed as we in dreams behold
One chosen of all thy fold,
One of all fair things fairest, one exalt
Above all fear or fault,
One unforgetful of unhappier men
And us who loved her then ;
With eyes that outlook suns and dream on graves ;
With voice like quiring waves ;
With heart the holier for their memories' sake
Who slept that she might wake ;

With breast the sweeter for that sweet blood lost,
And all the milkless cost;
Lady of earth, whose large equality
Bends but to her and thee;
Equal with heaven, and infinite of years,
And splendid from quenched tears;
Strong with old strength of great things fallen and fled,
Diviner for her dead;
Chaste of all stains and perfect from all scars,
Above all storms and stars,
All winds that blow through time, all waves that foam,—
Our Capitolian Rome.

THALASSIUS.

Upon the flowery forefront of the year,
One wandering by the gray-green April sea
Found on a reach of shingle and shallower sand,
Inlaid with starrier glimmering jewellery
Left for the sun's love and the light wind's cheer
Along the foam-flowered strand,
Breeze-brightened, something nearer sea than land
Though the last shoreward blossom-fringe was near,
A babe asleep, with flower-soft face that gleamed
To sun and seaward as it laughed and dreamed,
Too sure of either love for either's fear,
Albeit so birdlike slight and light, it seemed
Nor man, nor mortal child of man, but fair
As even its twin-born tenderer spray-flowers were,
That the wind scatters like an Oread's hair.

For when July strewed fire on earth and sea
The last time ere that year,
Out of the flame of morn Cymothoë
Beheld one brighter than the sun-bright sphere
Move toward her from its fieriest heart, whence trod
The live sun's very god,
Across the foam-bright water-ways that are
As heavenlier heavens, with star for answering star;

And on her eyes and hair and maiden mouth
Felt a kiss falling fierier than the South,
And heard above afar
A noise of songs and wind-enamored wings,
And lutes and lyres of milder and mightier strings,
And round the resonant radiance of his car
Where depth is one with height,
Light heard as music, music seen as light;
And with that second moondawn of the spring's
That fosters the first rose,
A sun-child whiter than the sunlit snows
Was born out of the world of sunless things
That round the round earth flows and ebbs and flows.

But he that found the sea-flower by the sea,
And took to foster like a graft of earth,
Was born of man's most highest and heavenliest birth,
Free-born as winds and stars and waves are free;
A warrior gray with glories more than years,
Though more of years than change the quick to dead
Had rained their light and darkness on his head;
A singer that in time's and memory's ears
Should leave such words to sing as all his peers
Might praise with hallowing heat of rapturous tears,
Till all the days of human flight were fled.
And at his knees his fosterling was fed,
Not with man's wine and bread,
Nor mortal mother-milk of hopes and fears,
But food of deep memorial days long sped;
For bread with wisdom, and with song for wine,
Clear as the full calm's emerald hyaline.
And from his grave glad lips the boy would gather
Fine honey of song-notes, goldener than gold,
More sweet than bees make of the breathing heather,
That he, as glad and bold,
Might drink as they, and keep his spirit from cold.
And the boy loved his laurel-laden hair
As his own father's risen on the eastern air,
And that less white brow-binding bay-leaf bloom,
More than all flowers his father's eyes relume;

And those high songs he heard,
More than all notes of any landward bird,
More than all sounds less free
Than the wind's quiring to the choral sea.

High things the high song taught him : how the breath,
Too frail for life, may be more strong than death ;
And this poor flash of sense in life, that gleams
As a ghost's glory in dreams,
More stabile than the world's own heart's root seems,
By that strong faith of lordliest love, which gives
To death's own sightless-seeming eyes a light
Clearer, to death's bare bones a verier might,
That shines or strikes from any man that lives ;
How he that loves life overmuch shall die
The dog's death, utterly ;
And he that much less loves it than he hates
All wrong-doing that is done,
Anywhere always underneath the sun,
Shall live a mightier life than time's or fate's.
One fairer thing he showed him, and in might
More strong than day and night,
Whose strengths build up time's towering period ;
Yea, one thing stronger and more high than God,
Which, if man had not, then should God not be :
And that was Liberty.
And gladly should man die to gain, he said,
Freedom ; and gladlier, having lost, lie dead.
For man's earth was not, nor the sweet sea-waves
His, nor his own land, nor its very graves,
Except they bred not, bore not, hid not slaves :
But all of all that is,
Were one man free in body and soul, were his.

And the song softened, even as heaven by night
Softens, from sunnier down to starrier light,
And with its moon-bright breath
Blessed life for death's sake, and for life's sake death ;
Till as the moon's own beam and breath confuse,
In one clear hueless haze of glimmering hues,

The sea's line, and the land's line, and the sky's,
And light for love of darkness almost dies,
As darkness only lives for light's dear love,
Whose hands the robe of night is woven of:
So in that heaven of wondrous words were life
And death brought out of strife;
Yea, by that strong spell of serene increase,
Brought out of strife to peace.

And the song lightened, as the wind at morn
Flashes, and even with lightning of the wind
Night's thick-spun web is thinned,
And all its weft unwoven and overworn
Shrinks, as might love from scorn.
And as when wind and light, on water and land,
Leap as twin gods from heavenward hand in hand,
And with the sound and splendor of their leap
Strike darkness dead, and daunt the spirit of sleep,
And burn it up with fire;
So with the light that lightened from the lyre,
Was all the bright heat in the child's heart stirred,
And blown with blasts of music into flame,
Till even his sense became
Fire, as the sense that fires the singing bird,
Whose song calls night by name.
And in the soul within the sense began
The manlike passion of a godlike man,
And in the sense within the soul again
Thoughts that made men of gods, and gods of men.

For love the high song taught him,—love that turns
God's heart toward man as man's to Godward; love
That life and death and life are fashioned of,
From the first breath that burns
Half-kindled on the flower-like yeanling's lip
So light and faint that life seems like to slip,
To that yet weaklier drawn
When sunset dies of night's devouring dawn;
But the man dying not wholly as all men dies
If aught be left of his in live men's eyes
Out of the dawnless dark of death to rise;

If aught of deed or word
Be seen for all time, or of all time heard.
Love, that though body and soul were overthrown,
Should live for love's sake of itself alone,
Though spirit and flesh were one thing doomed and dead,
Not wholly annihilated.
Seeing even the hoariest ash-flake that the pyre
Drops, and forgets the thing was once afire,
And gave its heart to feed the pile's full flame
Till its own heart its own heat overcame,
Outlives its own life, though by scarce a span,
As such men dying outlive themselves in man,
Outlive themselves forever ; if the heat
Outburn the heart that kindled it, the sweet
Outlast the flower whose soul it was, and flit
Forth of the body of it
Into some new shape of a strange perfume
More potent than its light live spirit of bloom,—
How shall not something of that soul re-live,
That only soul that had such gifts to give
As lighten something even of all men's doom,
Even from the laboring womb,
Even to the seal set on the unopening tomb ?
And these the loving light of song and love
Shall wrap and lap round, and impend above,
Imperishable ; and all springs born illume
Their sleep with brighter thoughts than wake the dove
To music, when the hillside winds resume
The marriage-song of heather-flower and broom
And all the joy thereof.

And hate the song, too, taught him,—hate of all
That brings or holds in thrall
Of spirit or flesh, free-born ere God began,
The holy body and sacred soul of man.
And wheresoever a curse was, or a chain,
A throne for torment or a crown for bane
Rose, moulded out of poor men's molten pain,
There, said he, should man's heaviest hate be set
Inexorably, to faint not or forget

Till the last warmth bled forth of the last vein
In flesh that none should call a king's again,
Seeing wolves and dogs and birds that plague-strike air
Leave the last bone of all the carrion bare.

And hope the high song taught him,—hope whose eyes
Can sound the seas unsoundable, the skies
Inaccessible of eyesight ; that can see
What earth beholds not, hear what wind and sea
Hear not, and speak what all these crying in one
Can speak not to the sun.
For in her sovereign eyelight all things are
Clear as the closest seen and kindlier star
That marries morn and even and winter and spring
With one love's golden ring.
For she can see the days of man, the birth
Of good, and death of evil things on earth
Inevitable and infinite, and sure
As present pain is, or herself is pure.
Yea, she can hear and see, beyond all things
That lighten from before Time's thunderous wings
Through the awful circle of wheelwinged periods,
The tempest of the twilight of all gods ;
And, higher than all the circling course they ran,
The sundawn of the spirit that was man.

And fear the song, too, taught him,—fear to be
Worthless the dear love of the wind and sea
That bred him fearless, like a sea-mew reared
In rocks of man's foot feared,
Where naught of wingless life may sing or shine.
Fear to wax worthless of that heaven he had
When all the life in all his limbs was glad,
And all the drops in all his veins were wine,
And all the pulses music ; when his heart,
Singing, bade heaven and wind and sea bear part
In one live song's reiterance, and they bore :
Fear to go crownless of the flower he wore
When the winds loved him, and the waters knew
The blithest life that clove their blithe life through

With living limbs exultant, or held strife
More amorous than all dalliance aye anew
With the bright breath and strength of their large life,
With all strong wrath of all sheer winds that blew,
All glories of all storms of the air that fell
Prone, ineluctable,
With roar from heaven of revel, and with hue
As of a heaven turned hell.
For when the red blast of their breath had made
All heaven aflush with light more dire than shade,
He felt it in his blood and eyes and hair
Burn as if all the fires of the earth and air
Had laid strong hold upon his flesh, and stung
The soul behind it as with serpent's tongue,
Forked like the loveliest lightnings: nor could bear
But hardly, half distraught with strong delight,
The joy that like a garment wrapped him round,
And lapped him over and under
With raiment of great light,
And rapture of great sound
At every loud leap earthward of the thunder
From heaven's most furthest bound:
So seemed all heaven in hearing and in sight,
Alive and mad with glory and angry joy,
That something of its marvellous mirth and might
Moved even to madness, fledged as even for flight,
The blood and spirit of one but mortal boy.

So, clothed with love, and fear that love makes great,
And armed with hope and hate,
He set first foot upon the spring-flowered ways
That all feet pass and praise.
And one dim dawn between the winter and spring,
In the sharp harsh wind harrying heaven and earth
To put back April that had borne his birth
From sunward on her sunniest showerstruck wing,
With tears and laughter for the dewdropt thing,
Slight as indeed a dewdrop, by the sea
One met him lovelier than all men may be,
God-featured, with god's eyes; and in their might
Somewhat that drew men's own to mar their sight,

Even of all eyes drawn toward him ; and his mouth
Was as the very rose of all men's youth,
One rose of all the rose-beds in the world :
But round his brows the curls were snakes that curled,
And like his tongue a serpent's ; and his voice
Speaks death, and bids rejoice.
Yet then he spake no word, seeming as dumb,
A dumb thing mild and hurtless ; nor at first
From his bowed eyes seemed any light to come,
Nor his meek lips for blood or tears to thirst :
But as one blind and mute in mild, sweet wise,
Pleading for pity of piteous lips and eyes,
He strayed with faint, bare, lily-lovely feet,
Helpless, and flower-like sweet :
Nor might man see, not having word hereof,
That this of all gods was the great god Love.

And seeing him lovely and like a little child
That well-nigh wept for wonder that it smiled,
And was so feeble and fearful, with soft speech
The youth bespake him softly ; but there fell
From the sweet lips no sweet word audible
That ear or thought might reach ;
No sound to make the dim cold silence glad,
No breath to thaw the hard harsh air with heat ;
Only the saddest smile of all things sweet,
Only the sweetest smile of all things sad.

And so they went together one green way
Till April dying made free the world for May ;
And on his guide suddenly Love's face turned,
And in his blind eyes burned
Hard light and heat of laughter ; and like flame
That opens in a mountain's ravening mouth
To blear and sear the sunlight from the south,
His mute mouth opened, and his first word came :
" Knowest thou me now by name ? "
And all his stature waxed immeasurable,
As of one shadowing heaven and lightening hell ;
And statelier stood he than a tower that stands
And darkens with its darkness far-off sands

Whereon the sky leans red ;
And with a voice that stilled the winds he said,—
"I am he that was thy lord before thy birth,
I am he that is thy lord till thou turn earth :
I make the night more dark, and all the morrow
Dark as the night whose darkness was my breath :
O fool, my name is Sorrow :
Thou fool, my name is Death."

And he that heard spake not, and looked right on
Again, and Love was gone.

Through many a night, toward many a wearier day,
His spirit bore his body down its way.
Through many a day, toward many a wearier night,
His soul sustained his sorrows in her sight.
And earth was bitter, and heaven, and even the sea,
Sorrowful even as he.
And the wind helped not, and the sun was dumb ;
And with too long strong stress of grief to be,
His heart grew sear and numb.

And one bright eve ere summer in autumn sank,
At star-dawn standing on a gray sea-bank
He felt the wind fitfully shift and heave
As toward a stormier eve ;
And all the wan wide sea shuddered ; and earth
Shook underfoot, as toward some timeless birth,
Intolerable and inevitable ; and all
Heaven, darkling, trembled like a stricken thrall ;
And far out of the quivering east, and far
From past the moonrise and its guiding star,
Began a noise of tempest, and a light
That was not of the lightning ; and a sound
Rang with it round and round,
That was not of the thunder ; and a flight
As of blown clouds by night,
That was not of them ; and with songs and cries
That sang and shrieked their soul out at the skies,
A shapeless earthly storm of shapes began
From all ways round to move in on the man,

Clamorous against him silent ; and their feet
Where as the winds are fleet,
And their shrill songs were as wild birds' are sweet.

And as when all the world of earth was wronged,
And all the host of all men driven afoam
By the red hand of Rome,
Round some fierce amphitheatre over-thronged
With fair clear faces full of bloodier lust
Than swells and stings the tiger when his mood
Is fieriest after blood,
And drunk with trampling of the murderous must
That soaks and stains the tortuous close-coiled wood
Made monstrous with its myriad-mustering brood,
Face by fair face panted and gleamed and pressed,
And breast by passionate breast
Heaved hot with ravenous rapture, as they quaffed
The red ripe full fume of the deep live draught,
The sharp quick reek of keen fresh bloodshed, blown
Through the dense deep drift up to the emperor's throne
From the under steaming sands,
With clamor of all-applausive throats and hands,
Mingling in mirthful time
With shrill, blithe mockeries of the lithe-limbed mime ;
So from somewhence far forth of the unbeholden,
Dreadfully driven from over and after and under,
Fierce, blown through fifes of brazen blast and golden,
With sound of chiming waves that drown the thunder,
Or thunder that strikes dumb the sea's own chimes,
Began the bellowing of the bull-voiced mimes,
Terrible ; firs bowed down as briers or palms
Even at the breathless blast as of a breeze
Fulfilled with clamor and clangor and storms of psalms ;
Red hands rent up the roots of old-world trees,
Thick flames of torches tossed as tumbling seas
Made mad the moonless and infuriate air
That, ravening, revelled in the riotous hair
And raiment of the furred Bassarides.

So came all those in on him ; and his heart,
As out of sleep suddenly struck a-start,
Danced, and his flesh took fire of theirs, and grief
Was as a last year's leaf
Blown dead far down the wind's way ; and he set
His pale mouth to the brightest mouth it met
That laughed for love against his lips, and bade
Follow ; and in following, all his blood grew glad
And as again a seabird's ; for the wind
Took him to bathe him deep round breast and brow ;
Not as it takes a dead leaf drained and thinned,
But as the brightest bay-flower blown on bough,
Set springing toward it singing : and they rode
By many a vine-leafed, many a rose-hung road,
Exalt with exaltation ; many a night
Set all its stars upon them as for spies
On many a moon-bewildering mountain height
Where he rode only by the fierier light
Of his dread lady's hot, sweet hungering eyes.
For the moon wandered witless of her way,
Spell-stricken by strong magic in such wise
As wizards use to set the stars astray.
And in his ears the music that makes mad
Beat always ; and what way the music bade,
That alway rode he ; nor was any sleep
His, nor from height nor deep.
But heaven was as red iron, slumberless,
And had no heart to bless ;
And earth lay sear and darkling as distraught,
And help in her was naught.

Then many a midnight, many a morn and even,
His mother, passing forth of her fair heaven,
With goodlier gifts and all save gods can give
From earth or from the heaven where sea-things live,
With shine of sea-flowers through the bay-leaf braid
Woven for a crown her foam-white hands had made
To crown him with land's laurel and sea dew,
Sought the sea-bird that was her boy : but he
Sat panther-throned beside Erigone,
Riding the red ways of the revel through
Midmost of pale-mouthed passion's crownless crew.

Till on some winter's dawn of some dim year
He let the vine-bit on the panther's lip
Slide, and the green rein slip,
And set his eyes to seaward, nor gave ear
If sound from landward hailed him, dire or dear;
And passing forth of all those fair fierce ranks
Back to the gray sea-banks,
Against a sea-rock lying, aslant the steep,
Fell after many sleepless dreams on sleep.

And in his sleep the dun green light was shed
Heavily round his head
That through the vale of sea falls fathom-deep,
Blurred like a lamp's that when the night drops dead
Dies; and his eyes gat grace of sleep to see
The deep divine dark day-shine of the sea,
Dense water-walls and clear dusk water-ways,
Broad-based, or branching as a sea-flower sprays
That side or this dividing; and anew
The glory of all her glories that he knew.
And in sharp rapture of recovering tears
He woke on fire with yearnings of old years,
Pure as one purged of pain that passion bore,
Ill child of bitter mother; for his own
Looked laughing toward him from her mid-sea throne,
Up toward him there ashore.

Thence in his heart the great same joy began,
Of child that made him man,
And, turned again from all hearts else on quest,
He communed with his own heart, and had rest.
And like the sea-winds upon loud waters ran
His days and dreams together, till the joy
Burned in him or the boy;
Till the earth's great comfort and the sweet sea's breath
Breathed and blew life in where was heartless death,—
Death spirit-stricken of soul-sick days, where strife
Of thought and flesh made mock of death and life.

And grace returned upon him of his birth
Where heaven was mixed with heavenlike sea and earth;
And song short forth strong wings that took the sun
From inward, fledged with might of sorrow and mirth,
And father's fire made mortal in his son.
Nor was not spirit of strength in blast and breeze
To exalt again the sun's child and the sea's;
For, as wild mares in Thessaly grow great
With child of ravishing winds, that violate
Their leaping length of limb with manes like fire,
And eyes outburning heaven's
With fires more violent than the lightning levin's,
And breath drained out and desperate of desire,
Even so the spirit in him, when winds grew strong,
Grew great with child of song.
Nor less than when his veins first leapt for joy
To draw delight in such as burns a boy,
Now, too, the soul of all his senses felt
The passionate pride of deep sea-pulses dealt
Through nerve and jubilant vein
As from the love and largess of old time;
And with his heart again
The tidal throb of all the tides keep rhyme,
And charm him from his own soul's separate sense
With infinite and invasive influence,
That made strength sweet in him, and sweetness strong,
Being now no more a singer, but a song.

Till one clear day, when brighter sea-wind blew,
And louder sea-shine lightened, for the waves
Were full of godhead and the light that saves,
His father's and their spirit had pierced him through,
He felt strange breath and light all round him shed
That bowed him down with rapture; and he knew
His father's hand, hallowing his humbled head,
And the old great voice of the old good time, that said:

"Child of my sunlight, and the sea, from birth
A fosterling and fugitive on earth;

Sleepless of soul as wind or wave or fire,
A man-child with an ungrown god's desire;
Because thou hast loved not mortal more than me,
Thy father, and thy mother-hearted sea;
Because thou hast set thine heart to sing, and sold
Life and life's love for song, God's living gold;
Because thou hast given thy flower and fire of youth
To feed men's hearts with visions truer than truth;
Because thou hast kept in those world-wandering eyes
The light that makes me music of the skies;
Because thou hast heard, with world-unwearied ears,
The music that puts light into the spheres,—
Have therefore in thine heart and in thy mouth
The sound of song that mingles north and south,
The song of all the winds that sing of me,
And in thy soul the sense of all the sea."

HERSE.

When grace is given us ever to behold
A child some sweet months old,
Love, laying across our lips his finger, saith,
Smiling, with bated breath,
Hush! for the holiest thing that lives is here,
And heaven's own heart how near!
How dare we, that may gaze not on the sun,
Gaze on this verier one?
Heart, hold thy peace; eyes, be cast down for shame;
Lips, breathe not yet its name.
In heaven they know what name to call it: we,
How should we know? For, see!
The adorable sweet living marvellous
Strange light that lightens us
Who gaze, desertless of such glorious grace,
Full in a babe's warm face!
All roses that the morning rears are naught,
All stars not worth a thought,
Set this one star against them, or suppose
As rival this one rose.

What price could pay with earth's whole weight of gold
One least flushed roseleaf's fold
Of all this dimpling store of smiles that shine
From each warm curve and line,
Each charm of flower-sweet flesh, to re-illume
The dappled rose-red bloom
Of all its dainty body, honey-sweet,
Clenched hands and curled-up feet,
That on the roses of the dawn have trod
As they came down from God,
And keep the flush and color that the sky
Takes when the sun comes nigh,
And keep the likeness of the smile their grace
Evoked on God's own face
When, seeing this work of his most heavenly mood,
He saw that it was good?
For all its warm sweet body seems one smile,
And mere men's love too vile
To meet it, or with eyes that worship dims
Read o'er the little limbs,
Read all the book of all their beauties o'er,
Rejoice, revere, adore,
Bow down and worship each delight in turn,
Laugh, wonder, yield, and yearn.
But when our trembling kisses dare, yet dread,
Even to draw nigh its head,
And touch, and scarce with touch or breath surprise
Its mild miraculous eyes
Out of their viewless vision — O, what then,
What may be said of men?
What speech may name a new-born child? what word
Earth ever spake or heard?
The best men's tongue that ever glory knew
Called that a drop of dew
Which from the breathing creature's kindly womb
Came forth in blameless bloom.
We have no word, as had those men most high,
To call a baby by.
Rose, ruby, lily, pearl of stormless seas —
A better word than these,

A better sign it was than flower or gem
  That love revealed to them:
They knew that whence comes light or quickening
    flame,
  Thence only this thing came,
And only might be likened of our love
  To somewhat born above,
Not even to sweetest things dropped else on earth,
  Only to dew's own birth.
Nor doubt we but their sense was heavenly true,
  Babe, when we gaze on you,
A dew-drop out of heaven, whose colors are
  More bright than sun or star,
As now, ere watching love dare fear or hope,
  Lips, hands, and eyelids ope,
And all your life is mixed with earthly leaven.
  O child, what news from heaven?

EIGHT YEARS OLD.

I.

Sun, when the faltering snow-cloud fears,
  Rise, let the time of year be May,
Speak now the word that April hears,
  Let March have all his royal way;
Bid all spring raise in winter's ears
  All tunes her children hear or play,
Because the crown of eight glad years
  On one bright head is set to-day.

II.

What matters cloud or sun to-day
  To him who wears the wreath of years
So many, and all like flowers at play
  With wind and sunshine, while his ears
Hear only song on every way?
  More sweet than spring triumphant hears
Ring through the revel-rout of May
  Are these, the notes that winter fears.

III.

Strong-hearted winter knows and fears
  The music made of love at play,

Or haply loves the tune he hears
From hearts fulfilled with flowering May,
Whose molten music thaws his ears
Late frozen, deaf but yesterday
To sounds of dying and dawning years,
Now quickened on his deathward way.

IV.

For deathward now lies winter's way
Down the green vestibule of years
That each year brightens day by day
With flower and shower till hope scarce fears,
And fear grows wholly hope of May.
But we—the music in our ears
Made of love's pulses as they play,
The heart alone that makes it hears.

V.

The heart it is that plays and hears
High salutation of to-day.
Tongue falters, hand shrinks back, song fears
Its own unworthiness to play
Fit music for those eight sweet years,
Or sing their blithe accomplished way.
No song quite worth a young child's ears
Broke ever even from birds in May.

VI.

There beats not in the heart of May,
When summer hopes and springtide fears,
There falls not from the height of day,
When sunlight speaks and silence hears,
So sweet a psalm as children play
And sing, each hour of all their years,
Each moment of their lovely way,
And know not how it thrills our ears.

VII.

Ah! child, what are we, that our ears
Should hear you singing on your way,
Should have this happiness? The years
Whose hurrying wings about us play

Are not like yours, whose flower-time fears
  Naught worse than sunlit showers in May,
Being sinless as the spring, that hears
  Her own heart praise her every day.

VIII.

Yet we, too, triumph in the day
  That bare, to entrance our eyes and ears,
To lighten daylight, and to play
  Such notes as darkness knows and fears,
The child whose face illumes our way,
  Whose voice lifts up the heart that hears,
Whose hand is as the hand of May
  To bring us flowers from eight full years.

Feb. 4, 1882.

"NON DOLET."

It does not hurt. She looked along the knife
  Smiling, and watched the thick drops mix and run
Down the sheer blade: not that which had been done
Could hurt the sweet sense of the Roman wife,
But that which was to do yet ere the strife
  Could end for each forever, and the sun:
  Nor was the palm yet nor was peace yet won
While pain had power upon her husband's life.

It does not hurt, Italia. Thou art more
  Than bride to bridegroom: how shalt thou not take
  The gift love's blood has reddened for thy sake?
Was not thy life-blood given for us before?
  And if love's heart-blood can avail thy need,
And thou not die, how should it hurt indeed?

LINES ON THE DEATH OF EDWARD JOHN TRELAWNY.

Last high star of the years whose thunder
  Still men's listening remembrance hears,
  Last light left of our fathers' years,
Watched with honor and hailed with wonder,
Thee too, then, have the years borne under,
  Thou too, then, hast regained thy peers.

Wings that warred with the winds of morning,
Storm-winds rocking the red great dawn,
Close at last, and a film is drawn
Over the eyes of the storm-bird, scorning
Now no longer the loud wind's warning,
Waves that threaten or waves that fawn.

Peers were none of thee left us living,
Peers of theirs we shall see no more,
Eight years over the full fourscore
Knew thee : now shalt thou sleep, forgiving
All griefs past of the wild world's giving,
Moored at last on the stormless shore.

World-wide liberty's lifelong lover,
Lover no less of the strength of song,
Sea-king, swordsman, hater of wrong,
Over thy dust that the dust shall cover
Comes my song as a bird to hover,
Borne of its will as of wings along.

Cherished of thee were this brief song's brothers
Now that follows them, cherishing thee.
Over the tides and the tideless sea,
Soft as a smile of the earth our mother's,
Flies it faster than all those others,
First of the troop at thy tomb to be.

Memories of Greece, and the mountain's hollow
Guarded alone of thy loyal sword,
Hold thy name for our hearts in ward :
Yet more fain are our hearts to follow
One way now with the southward swallow
Back to the grave of the man their lord.

Heart of hearts, art thou moved not, hearing
Surely, if hearts of the dead may hear,
Whose true heart it is now draws near ?
Surely the sense of it thrills thee, cheering
Darkness and death with the news now nearing,—
Shelley, Trelawny rejoins thee here.

OFF SHORE.

When the might of the summer
Is most on the sea ;
When the days overcome her
With joy but to be,
With rapture of royal enchantment, and sorcery that sets her not free,—

But for hours upon hours
As a thrall she remains
Spell-bound as with flowers,
And content in their chains,
And her loud steeds fret not, and lift not a lock of their deep white manes ;

Then only, far under
In the depths of her hold,
Some gleam of its wonder
Man's eye may behold,
Its wild weed forests of crimson and russet and olive and gold.

Still deeper and dimmer
And goodlier they glow
For the eyes of the swimmer
Who scans them below
As he crosses the zone of their flowerage that knows not of sunshine and snow.

Soft blossomless frondage
And foliage that gleams
As to prisoners in bondage
The light of their dreams,
The desire of a dawn unbeholden, with hope on the wings of its beams.

Not as prisoners entombed,
Waxen haggard and wizen,
But consoled and illumed
In the depths of their prison
With delight of the light everlasting, and vision of dawn on them risen,—

From the banks and the beds
Of the waters divine,
They lift up their heads,
And the flowers of them shine
Through the splendor of darkness that clothes them,
of water that glimmers like wine.

Bright bank over bank
Making glorious the gloom,
Soft rank upon rank,
Strange bloom after bloom,
They kindle the liquid low twilight, the dusk of the
dim sea's womb.

Through the subtile and tangible
Gloom without form,
Their branches, infrangible
Even of storm,
Spread softer their sprays than the shoots of the
woodland when April is warm.

As the flight of the thunder, full
Charged with its word,
Dividing the wonderful
Depths like a bird,
Speaks wrath and delight to the heart of the night
that exults to have heard,—

So swiftly, though soundless
In silence's ear,
Light, winged from the boundless
Blue depths full of cheer,
Speaks joy to the heart of the waters that part not
before him, but hear.

Light perfect and visible,
Godhead of God,
God indivisible,
Lifts but his rod,
And the shadows are scattered in sunder, and dark-
ness is light at his nod.

At the touch of his wand,
  At the nod of his head
From the spaces beyond
  Where the dawn hath her bed,
Earth, water, and air are transfigured, and rise as one risen from the dead.

He puts forth his hand,
  And the mountains are thrilled
To the heart, as they stand
  In his presence, fulfilled
With his glory that utters his grace upon earth, and her sorrows are stilled.

The moan of her travail
  That groans for the light
Till dayspring unravel
  The weft of the night,
At the sound of the strings of the music of morning, falls dumb with delight.

He gives forth his word,
  And the word that he saith,
Ere well it be heard,
  Strikes darkness to death;
For the thought of his heart is the sunrise, and dawn as the sound of his breath.

And the strength of its pulses,
  That passion makes proud,
Confounds and convulses
  The depths of the cloud
Of the darkness that heaven was ingirt with, divided and rent as a shroud,—

As the veil of the shrine
  Of the temple of old,
When darkness divine
  Over noonday was rolled;
So the heart of the night by the pulse of the light is convulsed and controlled.

And the sea's heart, groaning
  For glories withdrawn,

And the waves' mouths, moaning
All night for the dawn,
Are uplift as the hearts and the mouths of the singers
on lea-side and lawn.

And the sound of the quiring
Of all these as one,
Desired and desiring
Till dawn's will be done,
Fills full with delight of them heaven till it burns as
the heart of the sun;

Till the waves, too, inherit,
And waters take part
In the sense of the spirit
That breathes from his heart,
And are kindled with music, as fire when the lips of
the morning part,—

With music unheard
In the light of her lips,
In the life-giving word
Of the dewfall that drips
On the grasses of earth, and the wind that enkindles
the wings of the ships.

White glories of wings
As of seafaring birds,
That flock from the springs
Of the sunrise in herds,
With the wind for a herdsman, and hasten or halt at
the change of his words;

As the watchwords change,
When the wind's note shifts,
And the skies grow strange,
And the white squall drifts
Up sharp from the sea-line, vexing the sea till the
low cloud lifts.

At the charge of his word
Bidding pause, bidding haste,

When the ranks are stirred
And the lines displaced,
They scatter as wild swans, parting adrift on the wan green waste.

At the hush of his word,
In a pause of his breath
When the waters have heard
His will that he saith,
They stand as a flock penned close in its fold for division of death.

As a flock by division
Of death to be thinned,
As the shades in a vision
Of spirits that sinned;
So glimmer their shrouds and their sheetings as clouds on the stream of the wind.

But the sun stands fast,
And the sea burns bright,
And the flight of them past
Is no more than the flight
Of the snow-soft swarm of serene wings poised and afloat in the light.

Like flowers upon flowers,
In a festival way,
When hours after hours
Shed grace on the day,
White blossom-like butterflies hover and gleam through the snows of the spray.

Like snow-colored petals
Of blossoms that flee
From storm that unsettles
The flowers as the tree,
They flutter, a legion of flowers on the wing, through the field of the sea.

Through the furrowless field
Where the foam-blossoms blow,

And the secrets are sealed
Of their harvest below,
They float in the path of the sunbeams, as flakes or as blossoms of snow.

Till the sea's ways darken,
And the god, withdrawn,
Give ear not, or hearken
If prayer on him fawn,
And the sun's self seem but a shadow, the noon as a ghost of the dawn.

No shadow, but rather,
God, father of song,
Show grace to me, Father
God, loved of me long,
That I lose not the light of thy face, that my trust in thee work me not wrong,—

While yet I make forward
With face toward thee,
Not turned yet in shoreward,
Be thine upon me;
Be thy light on my forehead, or ever I turn it again from the sea.

As a kiss on my brow
Be the light of thy grace,
Be thy glance on me now
From the pride of thy place:
As the sign of a sire to a son, be the light on my face of thy face.

Thou wast father of olden
Times hailed and adored.
And the sense of thy golden
Great harp's monochord
Was the joy in the soul of the singers that hailed thee for master and lord.

Fair father of all
In thy ways that have trod,
That have risen at thy call,

That have thrilled at thy nod,
Arise, shine, lighten upon me, O sun! that we see to be God.

As my soul has been dutiful
Only to thee,
O God! most beautiful,
Lighten thou me,
As I swim through the dim long rollers, with eyelids uplift from the sea.

Be praised and adored of us,
All in accord,
Father and lord of us
Always adored,
The slayer, and the stayer, and the harper, the light of us all, and our lord.

At the sound of thy lyre,
At the touch of thy rod,
Air quickens to fire
By the foot of thee trod,
The savior, and healer, and singer, the living and visible God.

The years are before thee
As shadows of thee,
As men that adore thee,
As cloudlets that flee:
But thou art the God, and thy kingdom is heaven, and thy shrine is the sea.

EVENING ON THE BROADS.

Over two shadowless waters, adrift as a pinnace in peril,
Hangs as in heavy suspense, charged with irresolute light,
Softly the soul of the sunset upholden awaits on the sterile
Waves and wastes of the land, half repossessed by the night.

Inland glimmer the shallows asleep, and afar in the breathless
Twilight : yonder the depths darken afar and asleep.
Slowly the semblance of death out of heaven descends on the deathless
Waters : hardly the light lives on the face of the deep,—
Hardly, but here for a while. All over the gray soft shallow
Hover the colors and clouds of the twilight, void of a star.
As a bird unfledged is the broad-winged night, whose winglets are callow
Yet, but soon with their plumes will she cover her brood from afar,—
Cover the brood of her worlds that cumber the skies with their blossom,
Thick as the darkness of leaf-shadowed spring is encumbered with flowers.
World upon world is enwound in the bountiful girth of her bosom,
Warm and lustrous with life lovely to look on as ours.
Still is the sunset adrift as a spirit in doubt that dissembles
Still with itself, being sick of division, and dimmed by dismay—
Nay, not so ; but with love and delight beyond passion it trembles,
Fearful and fain of the night, lovely with love of the day :
Fain and fearful of rest that is like unto death, and begotten
Out of the womb of the tomb, born of the seed of the grave :
Lovely with shadows of loves that are only not wholly forgotten,
Only not wholly suppressed by the dark, as a wreck by the wave.
Still there linger the loves of the morning and noon, in a vision
Blindly beheld, but in vain ; ghosts that are tired, and would rest.

But the glories beloved of the night rise all too dense for division,
Deep in the depth of her breast sheltered as doves in a nest.
Fainter the beams of the loves of the daylight season enkindled
Wane, and the memories of hours that were fair with the love of them fade ;
Loftier, aloft of the lights of the sunset stricken and dwindled,
Gather the signs of the love at the heart of the night new-made.
New-made night, new-born of the sunset, immeasurable, endless,
Opens the secret of love hid from of old in her heart,—
In the deep sweet heart full-charged with faultless love of the friendless
Spirits of men that are eased when the wheels of the sun depart.
Still is the sunset afloat as a ship on the waters upholden
Full-sailed, wide-winged, poised softly forever a-sway—
Nay, not so, but at least for a little, a while at the golden
Limit of arching air fain for an hour to delay.
Here on the bar of the sand-bank, steep yet aslope to the gleaming
Waste of the water without, waste of the water within,
Lights overhead and lights underneath seen doubtfully dreaming
Whether the day be done, whether the night may begin.
Far and afar and farther again, they falter and hover,
Warm on the water, and deep in the sky, and pale on the cloud :
Colder again, and slowly remoter, afraid to recover
Breath, yet fain to revive, as it seems, from the skirt of the shroud.
Faintly the heart-beats shorten and pause of the light in the westward

Heaven, as eastward quicken the paces of star upon star
Hurried and eager of life as a child that strains to the breast-ward
Eagerly, yearning forth of the deeps where the ways of them are,
Glad of the glory of the gift of their life and the wealth of its wonder,
Fain of the night, and the sea, and the sweet wan face of the earth.
Over them air grows deeper, intense with delight in them : under
Things are thrilled in their sleep, as with sense of a sure new birth.
But here by the sand-bank watching, with eyes on the sea-line, stranger
Grows to me also the weight of the sea-ridge gazed on of me,
Heavily heaped up, changefully changeless, void though of danger,
Void not of menace, but full of the might of the dense dull sea.
Like as the wave is before me, behind is the bank deep-drifted ;
Yellow and thick as the bank is behind me, in front is the wave.
As the wall of a prison imprisoning the mere, is the girth of it lifted ;
But the rampire of water in front is erect as the wall of a grave.
And the crests of it crumble and topple and change, but the wall is not broken :
Standing still dry-shod, I see it as higher than my head,
Moving inland alway again, reared up as in token
Still of impending wrath still in the foam of it shed.
And even in the pauses between them, dividing the rollers in sunder,
High overhead seems ever the sea-line fixed as a mark ;
And the shore where I stand, as a valley beholden of hills whence thunder

Cloud and torrent and storm, darkening the depths of the dark.
Up to the sea, not upon it or over it, upward from under
Seems he to gaze, whose eyes yearn after it here from the shore;
A wall of turbid water, a-slope to the wide sky's wonder
Of color and cloud, it climbs, or spreads as a slanted floor.
And the large lights change on the face of the mere, like things that were living,
Winged and wonderful, beams like as birds are that pass and are free;
But the light is dense as darkness, a gift withheld in the giving,
That lies as dead on the fierce dull face of the landward sea.
Stained and stifled and soiled, made earthlier than earth is and duller,
Grimly she puts back light as rejected, a thing put away:
No transparent rapture, a molten music of color;
No translucent love taken and given of the day.
Fettered and marred and begrimed, is the light's live self on her falling,
As the light of a man's life lighted the fume of a dungeon mars:
Only she knows of the wind, when her wrath gives ear to him calling;
The delight of the light she knows not, nor answers the sun or the stars.
Love she hath none to return for the luminous love of their giving:
None to reflect from the bitter and shallow response of her heart.
Yearly she feeds on her dead, yet herself seems dead and not living,
Or confused as a soul heavy-laden with trouble that will not depart.
In the sound of her speech to the darkness the moan of her evil remorse is,

Haply, for strong ships gnawed by the dog-toothed
sea-bank's fang,
And trampled to death by the rage of the feet of her
foam-lipped horses,
Whose manes are yellow as plague, and as ensigns
of pestilence hang,
That wave in the foul faint air of the breath of a
death-stricken city ;
So menacing heaves she the manes of her rollers
knotted with sand,
Discolored, opaque, suspended in sign as of strength
without pity,
That shake with flameless thunder the low long
length of the strand.
Here, far off in the farther extreme of the shore as
it lengthens
Northward, lonely for miles, ere ever a village be-
gin,
On the lapsing land that recedes as the growth of
the strong sea strengthens
Shoreward, thrusting further and further its out-
works in,
Here in Shakespeare's vision, a flower of her kin for-
saken,
Lay in her golden raiment alone on the wild wave's
edge,
Surely by no shore else, but here on the bank storm-
shaken,
Perdita, bright as a dewdrop engilt of the sun on
the sedge.
Here on a shore unbeheld of his eyes, in a dream, he
beheld her
Outcast, fair as a fairy, the child of a far-off king ;
And over the babe-flower gently the head of a pas-
toral elder
Bowed, compassionate, hoar as the hawthorn-blos-
som in spring,
And kind as harvest in autumn : a shelter of shade
on the lonely
Shelterless unknown shore, scourged of implacable
waves :
Here, where the wind walks royal, alone in his king-
dom, and only

Sounds to the sedges a wail as of triumph that conquers and craves.
All these waters and wastes are his empire of old, and awaken
From barren and stagnant slumber at only the sound of his breath:
Yet the hunger is eased not that aches in his heart, nor the goal overtaken
That his wide wings yearn for, and labor as hearts that yearn after death.
All the solitude sighs and expects with a blind expectation
Somewhat unknown of its own sad heart, grown heart-sick of strife:
Till sometime its wild heart maddens, and moans, and the vast ululation
Takes wing with the clouds on the waters, and wails to be quit of its life.
For the spirit and soul of the waste is the wind, and his wings with their waving
Darken and lighten the darkness and light of it thickened or thinned,
But the heart that impels them is even as a conqueror's insatiable craving
That victory can fill not, as power cannot satiate the want of the wind.
All these moorlands and marshes are full of his might, and oppose not
Aught of defence nor of barrier, of forest or precipice piled;
But the will of the wind works ever as his that desires what he knows not,
And the wail of his want unfulfilled is as one making moan for her child.
And the cry of his triumph is even as the crying of hunger that maddens
The heart of a strong man, aching in vain as the wind's heart aches;
And the sadness itself of the land for its infinite solitude saddens
More for the sound than the silence athirst for the sound that slakes.

And the sunset at last, and the twilight are dead; and the darkness is breathless
With fear of the wind's breath rising that seems and seems not to sleep;
But a sense of the sound of it alway, a spirit unsleeping and deathless,
Ghost or god, evermore moves on the face of the deep.

THE EMPEROR'S PROGRESS.

A STUDY IN THREE STAGES.

(On the Busts of Nero in the Uffizj.)

CHILD of brighter than the morning's birth,
And lovelier than all smiles that may be smiled
Save only of little children undefiled,
Sweet, perfect, witless of their own dear worth,
Live rose of love, mute melody of mirth,
Glad as a bird is when the woods are mild,
Adorable as is nothing save a child,
Hails with wide eyes and lips his life on earth,
His lovely life with all its heaven to be.
And whoso reads the name inscribed, or hears,
Feels his own heart a frozen well of tears,
Child, for deep dread and fearful pity of thee
Whom God would not let rather die than see
The incumbent horror of impending years.

II.

Man, that wast godlike being a child, and now,
No less than kinglike, art no more in sooth
For all thy grace and lordliness of youth,
The crown that bids men's branded foreheads bow,
Much more has branded and bowed down thy brow,
And gnawn upon it as with fire or tooth
Of steel or snake so sorely, that the truth
Seems here to bear false witness. Is it thou,
Child? and is all the summer of all thy spring
This? are the smiles that drew men's kisses down
All faded and transfigured to the frown

That grieves thy face? Art thou this weary thing?
  Then is no slave's load heavier than a crown,
And such a thrall no bondman as a king.

III.

Misery beyond all men's most miserable,
  Absolute, whole, defiant of defence,
  Inevitable, inexplacable, intense,
More vast than heaven is high, more deep than hell,
Past cure or charm of solace or of spell,
  Possesses and pervades the spirit and sense
  Whereto the expanse of the earth pays tribute; whence
Breeds evil only, and broods on fumes that swell
Rank from the blood of brother and mother and wife.
  "Misery of miseries, all is misery," saith
The heavy fair-faced hateful head, at strife
  With its own lusts that burn with feverous breath,
Lips which the loathsome bitterness of life
  Leaves fearful of the bitterness of death.

SIX YEARS OLD.

To H. W. M.

Between the springs of six and seven,
  Two fresh years' fountains, clear
Of all but golden sand for leaven,
  Child, midway passing here,
As earth for love's sake dares bless heaven,
  So dare I bless you, dear.

Between two bright well-heads, that brighten
  With every breath that blows
Too loud to lull, too low to frighten,
  But fain to rock, the rose,
Your feet stand fast, your lit smiles lighten,
  That might rear flowers from snows.

You came when winds unleashed were snarling
  Behind the frost-bound hours,

A snow-bird sturdier than the starling,
A storm-bird fledged for showers,
That spring might smile to find you, darling,
First-born of all the flowers.

Could love make worthy things of worthless,
My song were worth an ear:
Its note should make the days most mirthless
The merriest of the year,
And wake to birth all buds yet birthless,
To keep your birthday, dear.

But where your birthday brightens heaven
No need has earth, God knows,
Of light or warmth to melt or leaven
The frost or fog that glows
With sevenfold heavenly lights of seven
Sweet springs that cleave the snows.

Could love make worthy music of you,
And match my Master's powers,
Had even my love less heart to love you,
A better song were ours;
With all the rhymes like stars above you,
And all the words like flowers.

SEPT. 30, 1880.

A PARTING SONG.

(To a friend leaving England for a year's residence in Australia.)

THESE winds and suns of spring,
That warm with breath and wing
The trembling sleep of earth, till half awake
She laughs and blushes ere her slumber break,
For all good gifts they bring
Require one better thing,
For all the loans of joy they lend us, borrow
One sharper dole of sorrow,
To sunder soon by half a world of sea
Her son from England, and my friend from me.

Nor hope nor love nor fear
May speed or stay one year,
Nor song nor prayer may bid, as mine would fain.
The seasons perish and be born again,
Restoring all we lend,
Reluctant, of a friend,—
The voice, the hand, the presence, and the sight,
That lend their life and light
To present gladness and heart-strengthening cheer,
Now lent again for one reluctant year.

So much we lend indeed,
Perforce, by force of need,
So much we must ; even these things and no more,
The far sea sundering and the sundered shore
A world apart from ours,
So much the imperious hours ;
Exact, and spare not ; but no more than these
All earth and all her seas
From thought and faith of trust and truth can borrow,
Not memory from desire, nor hope from sorrow.

Through bright and dark and bright
Returns of day and night
I bid the swift year speed, and change and give
His breath of life to make the next year live
With sunnier suns for us,
A life more prosperous,
And laugh with flowers more fragrant, that shall see
A merrier March for me,
A rosier-girdled race of night with day,
A goodlier April, and a tenderer May.

For him the inverted year
Shall mark our seasons here
With alien alternation, and revive
This withered winter, slaying the spring alive
With darts more sharply drawn
As nearer draws the dawn,
In heaven transfigured over earth transformed,
And with our winters warmed

And wasted with our summers, till the beams
Rise on his face that rose on Dante's dreams.

Till fourfold morning rise
Of star-shine on his eyes,
Dawn of the spheres that brand steep heaven across
At height of night with semblance of a cross
Whose grace and ghostly glory
Poured heaven on purgatory,
Seeing with their flamelets risen all heaven grow glad
For love thereof it had
And lovely joy of loving; so may these
Make bright with welcome now their southern seas.

O happy stars, whose mirth
The saddest soul on earth
That ever soared and sang, found strong to bless,
Lightening his life's harsh load of heaviness
With comfort sown like seed
In dreams though not in deed,
On sprinkled wastes of darkling thought divine!
Let all your lights now shine
With all as glorious gladness on his eyes.
For whom indeed, and not in dream, they rise.

As those great twins of air
Hailed once with old-world prayer
Of all folk alway faring forth by sea,
So now may these for grace and guidance be,
To guard his sail, and bring
Again to brighten spring
The face we look for, and the hand we lack
Still, till they light him back,
As welcome as to first discovering eyes
Their light rose ever, soon on his to rise.

As parting now he goes
From snow-time back to snows,
So back to spring from summer may next year
Restore him, and our hearts receive him here,—
The best good gift that spring
Had ever grace to bring

At fortune's happiest hour of star-blest birth,
Back to love's home-bright earth,
To eyes with eyes that commune, hand with hand,
And the old warm bosom of all our mother-land.

Earth and sea-wind and sea
And stars and sunlight be
Alike all prosperous for him, and all hours
Have all one heart, and all that heart as ours.
All things as good as strange,
Crown all the seasons' change
With changing flower and compensating fruit
From one year's ripening root;
Till next year bring us, roused at spring's recall,
A heartier flower and goodlier fruit than all.

MARCH 26, 1880.

BY THE NORTH SEA.

I.

1.

A LAND that is lonelier than ruin;
A sea that is stranger than death;
Far fields that a rose never blew in,
Wan waste where the winds lack breath;
Waste endless and boundless, and flowerless
But of marsh-blossoms fruitless as free;
Where earth lies exhausted, as powerless
To strive with the sea.

2.

Far flickers the flight of the swallows,
Far flutters the weft of the grass
Spun dense over desolate hollows,
More pale than the clouds as they pass;
Thick woven as the web of a witch is
Round the heart of a thrall that hath sinned,
Whose youth and the wrecks of its riches
Are waifs on the wind.

3.

The pastures are herdless and sheepless,
No pasture or shelter for herds:
The wind is relentless and sleepless,
And restless and songless the birds;
Their cries from afar fall breathless,
Their wings are as lightnings that flee;
For the land has two lords that are deathless,—
Death's self, and the sea.

4.

These twain, as a king with his fellow,
Hold converse of desolate speech;
And her waters are haggard and yellow
And crass with the scurf of the beach;
And his garments are gray as the hoary
Wan sky where the day lies dim;
And his power is to her, and his glory,
As hers unto him.

5.

In the pride of his power she rejoices,
In her glory he glows and is glad:
In her darkness the sound of his voice is,
With his breath she dilates, and is mad:
"If thou slay me, O death, and outlive me,
Yet thy love hath fulfilled me of thee."
"Shall I give thee not back if thou give me,
O sister, O sea?"

6.

And year upon year dawns living,
And age upon age drops dead:
And his hand is not weary of giving,
And the thirst of her heart is not fed:
And the hunger that moans in her passion.
And the rage in her hunger that roars,
As a wolf's that the winter lays lash on.
Still calls and implores.

7.

Her walls have no granite for girder,
No fortalice fronting her stands;

But reefs the bloodguiltiest of murder
Are less than the banks of her sands:
These number their slain by the thousand;
For the ship hath no surety to be,
When the bank is abreast of her bows, and
Aflush with the sea.

8.

No surety to stand, and no shelter
To dawn out of darkness but one,
Out of waters that hurtle and welter,
No succor to dawn with the sun
But a rest from the wind as it passes,
Where, hardly redeemed from the waves,
Lie thick as the blades of the grasses
The dead in their graves.

9.

A multitude noteless of numbers,
As wild weeds cast on an heap,
And sounder than sleep are their slumbers,
And softer than song is their sleep;
And sweeter than all things, and stranger
The sense, if perchance it may be,
That the wind is divested of danger,
And scatheless the sea;

10.

That the roar of the banks they breasted
Is hurtless as bellowing of herds,
And the strength of his wings that invested
The wind, as the strength of a bird's:
As the sea-mew's might or the swallow's
That cry to him back if he cries,
As over the graves and their hollows
Days darken and rise.

11.

As the souls of the dead men disburdened
And clean of the sins that they sinned,

With a lovelier than man's life guerdoned,
And delight as a waves in the wind,
And delight as the wind's in the billow,
Birds pass, and deride with their glee
The flesh that has dust for its pillows
As wrecks have the sea.

12.

When the ways of the sun wax dimmer,
Wings flash through the dusk like beams;
As the clouds in the lit sky glimmer,
The bird in the graveyard gleams;
As the cloud at its wing's edge whitens
When the clarions of sunrise are heard,
The graves that the bird's note brightens
Grow bright for the bird.

13.

As the waves of the numberless waters
That the wind cannot number who guides,
Are the sons of the shore and the daughters
Here lulled by the chime of the tides;
And here in the press of them standing
We know not if these or if we
Live truliest,—or anchored to landing,
Or drifted to sea.

14.

In the valley he named of decision,
No denser were multitudes met
When the soul of the seer in her vision
Saw nations for doom of them set;
Saw darkness in dawn, and the splendor
Of judgment, the sword and the rod:
But the doom here of death is more tender,
And gentler the god.

15.

And gentler the wind from the dreary
Sea-banks by the waves overlapped,

Being weary, speaks peace to the weary,
From slopes that the tide-stream hath sapped;
And sweeter than all that we call so
The seal of their slumber shall be
Till the graves that embosom them also
Be sapped of the sea.

II.

1.

For the heart of the waters is cruel,
And the kisses are dire of their lips,
And their waves are as fire is to fuel
To the strength of the seafaring ships,
Though the sea's eye gleam as a jewel
To the sun's eye back as he dips.

2.

Though the sun's eye flash to the sea's
Liv light of delight and of laughter,
And her i s breathe back to the breeze
Th kiss that the wind s lips waft her
From the sun that subsides, and sees
No gleam of the storm's dawn after.

3.

And the wastes of the wild sea-marches
Where the borderers are matched in their might—
Bleak fens that the sun's weight parches,
Dense waves that reject his light—
Change under the change-colored arches
Of changeless morning and night.

4.

The waves are as ranks enrolled
Too close for the storm to sever:
The fens lie naked and cold,
But their heart fails utterly never:
The lists are set from of old,
And the warfare endureth forever.

III.

1.

Miles and miles and miles of desolation!
Leagues on leagues on leagues without a change!
Sign or token of some eldest nation
Here would make the strange land not so strange.
Time-forgotten, yea since time's creation,
Seem these borders where the seabirds range.

2.

Slowly, gladly, full of peace an wonder
Grows his heart who journeys here alone.
Earth and all its thoughts of earth sink under
Deep as deep in water sinks a stone;
Hardly knows it if the rollers thunder,
Hardly whence the lonely wind is blown.

3.

Tall the plumage of the rush-flower tosses;
Sharp and soft in many a curve and line,
Gleam and glow the sea-colored marsh-mosses,
Salt and splendid from the circling brine;
Streak on streak of glimmering sea-shine crosses
All the land sea-saturate as with wine.

4.

Far, and far between, in divers orders,
Clear gray steeples cleave the low gray sky;
Fast and firm as time-unshaken warders,
Hearts made sure by faith, by hope made high.
These alone in all the wild sea-borders
Fear no blast of days and nights that die.

5.

All the land is like as one man's face is,
Pale and troubled still with change of cares.
Doubt and death pervade her clouded spaces;
Strength and length of life and peace are theirs,—
Theirs alone amid these weary places,
Seeing not how the wild world frets and fares.

6.

Firm and fast where all is cloud that changes,
Cloud-clogged sunlight, cloud by sunlight thinned,
Stern and sweet, above the sand-hill ranges.
Watch the towers and tombs of men that sinned
Once, now calm as earth, whose only change is
Wind, and light, and wind, and cloud, and wind.

7.

Out and in and out the sharp straits wander,
In and out and in the wild way strives,
Starred and paved and lined with flowers that squander
Gold as golden as the gold of hives,
Salt and moist and multiform ; but yonder,
See, what sign of life or death survives ?

8.

Seen then only when the songs of olden
Harps were young, whose echoes yet endure,
Hymned of Homer when his years were golden,
Known of only when the world was pure,
Here is Hades, manifest, beholden,
Surely, surely here, if aught be sure !

9.

Where the border-line was crossed, that, sundering
Death from life, keeps weariness from rest,
None can tell, who fares here forward wondering ;
None may doubt but here might end his quest.
Here life's lightning joys and woes once thundering
Sea-like round him cease like storm suppressed.

10.

Here the wise wave-wandering steadfast-hearted
Guest of many a lord, of many a land,
Saw the shape or shade of years departed,
Saw the semblance risen and hard at hand,
Saw the mother long from love's reach parted,
Anticleia, like a statue stand.

II.

Statue ? nay, nor tissued image woven
Fair on hangings in his father's hall ;
Nay, too fast her faith of heart was proven,
Far too firm her loveliest love of all ;
Love wherethrough the loving heart was cloven,
Love that hears not when the loud Fates call.

12.

Love that lives and stands up re-created
Then when life has ebbed and anguish fled ;
Love more strong than death or all things fated,
Child's and mother's, lit by love and led ;
Love that found what life so long awaited
Here, when life came down among the dead.

13.

Here, where never came alive another,
Came her son across the sundering tide
Crossed before by many a warrior brother
Once that warred on Ilion at his side ;
Here spread forth vain hands to clasp the mother
Dead, that sorrowing for his love's sake died.

14.

Parted, though by narrowest of divisions,
Clasp he might not, only might implore,
Sundered yet by bitterest of derisions,
Son, and mother from the son she bore—
Here ? But all dispeopled here of visions
Lies, forlorn of shadows even, the shore.

15.

All too sweet such men's Hellenic speech is,
All too fain they lived of light to see,
Once to see the darkness of these beaches,
Once to sing this Hades found of me,
Ghostless, all its gulfs and creeks and reaches,
Sky, and shore, and cloud, and waste, and sea.

IV.

1.

But aloft and afront of me faring
Far forward as folk in a dream
That strive, between doubting and daring,
Right on till the goal for them gleam,
Full forth till their goal on them lighten,
The harbor where fain they would be,
What headlands there darken and brighten?
What change in the sea?

2.

What houses and woodlands that nestle
Safe inland to lee of the hill
As it slopes from the headlands that wrestle
And succumb to the strong sea's will?
Truce is not, nor respite nor pity;
For the battle is waged not of hands,
Where over the grave of a city
The ghost of it stands.

3.

Where the wings of the sea-wind slacken,
Green lawns to the landward thrive,
Fields brighten and pine-woods blacken,
And the heat in their heart is alive;
They blossom and warble and murmur,
For the sense of their spirit is free:
But harder to shoreward and firmer
The grasp of the sea.

4.

Like ashes the low cliffs crumble,
The banks drop down into dust,
The heights of the hills are made humble,
As a reed's is the strength of their trust;
As a city's that armies environ,
The strength of their stay is of sand:
But the grasp of the sea is as iron,
Laid hard on the land.

5.

A land that is thirstier than ruin ;
A sea that is hungrier than death ;
Heaped hills that a tree never grew in ;
Wide sands where the wave draws breath ;
All solace is here for the spirit
That ever forever may be
For the soul of thy son to inherit,
My mother, my sea.

6.

O delight of the headlands and beaches !
O desire of the wind on the wold,
More glad than a man's when it reaches
That end which it sought from of old,
And the palm of possession is dreary
To the sense that in search of it sinned ;
But nor satisfied ever nor weary
Is ever the wind.

7.

The delight that he takes but in living
Is more than of all things that live ;
For the world that has all things for giving
Has nothing so goodly to give :
But more than delight his desire is,
For the goal where his pinions would be
Is immortal as air or as fire is,
Immense as the sea.

8.

Though hence come the moan that he borrows
From darkness and depths of the night,
Though hence be the spring of his sorrows,
Hence too is the joy of his might,—
The delight that his doom is forever
To seek, and desire, and rejoice,
And the sense that eternity never
Shall silence his voice ;

9.

That satiety never may stifle,
Nor weariness ever estrange,
Nor time be so strong as to rifle,
Nor change be so great as to change
His gift that renews in the giving,
The joy that exalts him to be
Alone of all elements living
The lord of the sea.

10.

What is fire, that its flame should consume her?
More fierce than all fires are her waves.
What is earth, that its gulfs should entomb her?
More deep are her own that their graves.
Life shrinks from his pinions that cover
The darkness by thunders bedinned;
But she knows him, her lord and her lover,
The godhead of wind.

11.

For a season his wings are about her,
His breath on her lips for a space;
Such rapture he wins not without her
In the width of his world-wide race.
Though the forests bow down, and the mountains
Wax dark, and the tribes of them flee,
His delight is more deep in the fountains
And springs of the sea.

12.

There are those too of mortals that love him,
There are souls that desire and require,
Be the glories of midnight above him,
Or beneath him the daysprings of fire;
And their hearts are as harps that approve him
And praise him as chords of a lyre
That were fain with their music to move him
To meet their desire.

13.

To descend through the darkness to grace them,
Till darkness were lovelier than light:
To encompass and grasp and embrace them,
Till their weakness were one with his might;
With the strength of his wings to caress them,
With the blast of his breath to set free;
With the mouths of his thunders to bless them
For sons of the sea.

14.

For these have the toil and the guerdon
That the wind has eternally: these
Have part in the boon and the burden
Of the sleepless, unsatisfied breeze,
That finds not, but seeking rejoices
That possession can work him no wrong;
And the voice at the heart of their voice is
The sense of his song.

15.

For the wind's is their doom and their blessing;
To desire, and have always above
A possession beyond their possessing,
A love beyond reach of their love.
Green earth has her sons and her daughters,
And these have their guerdons; but we
Are the wind's, and the sun's, and the water's,
Elect of the sea.

V.

1.

For the sea too seeks and rejoices,
Gains and loses and gains,
And the joy of her heart's own choice is
As ours, and as ours are her pains:
As the thoughts of our hearts are her voices,
And as hers is the pulse of our veins.

2.

Her fields that know not of dearth,
Nor lie for their fruit's sake fallow,
Laugh large in the depths of their mirth;
But inshore here in the shallow,
Embroiled with encumbrance of earth,
Their skirts are turbid and yellow.

3.

The grime of her greed is upon her,
The sign of her deed is her soil;
As the earth's is her own dishonor,
And corruption the crown of her toil:
She hath spoiled and devoured, and her honor
Is this, to be shamed by her spoil.

4.

But afar where pollution is none,
Nor ensign of strife nor endeavor,
Where her heart and the sun's are one,
And the soil of her sin comes never,
She is pure as the wind and the sun,
And her sweetness endureth forever.

VI.

1.

Death, and change, and darkness everlasting,
Deaf, that hears not what the daystar saith,
Blind, past all remembrance and forecasting,
Dead, past memory that it once drew breath;
These, above the washing tides and wasting,
Reign, and rule this land of utter death.

2.

Change of change, darkness of darkness, hidden,
Very death of very death, begun
When none knows,—the knowledge is forbidden—
Self-begotten, self-proceeding, one,
Born, not made—abhorred, unchained, unchidden,
Night stands here defiant of the sun.

3.

Change of change, and death of death begotten,
Darkness born of darkness, one and three,
Ghostly godhead of a world forgotten,
Crowned with heaven, enthroned on land and sea,
Here, where earth with dead men's bones is rotten,
God of Time, thy likeness worships thee.

4.

Lo, thy likeness of thy desolation,
Shape and figure of thy might, O Lord,
Formless form, incarnate miscreation,
Served of all things living and abhorred;
Earth herself is here thine incarnation,
Time, of all things born on earth adored.

5.

All that worship thee are fearful of thee;
No man may not worship thee for fear:
Prayers nor curses prove not nor disprove thee,
Move nor change thee with our change of cheer:
All at last, though all abhorred thee, love thee,
God, the sceptre of whose throne is here.

6.

Here thy throne and sceptre of thy station,
Here the palace paven for thy feet;
Here thy sign from nation unto nation
Passed as watchword for thy guards to greet,
Guards that go before thine exaltation,
Ages, clothed with bitter years and sweet.

7.

Here, where sharp the sea-bird shrills his ditty,
Flickering flame-wise through the clear live calm,
Rose triumphal, crowning all a city,
Roofs exalted once with prayer and psalm,
Built of holy hands for holy pity,
Frank and fruitful as a sheltering palm.

8.

Church and hospice wrought in faultless fashion,
Hall and chancel bounteous and sublime,
Wide and sweet and glorious as compassion,
Filled and thrilled with force of choral chime,
Filled with spirit of prayer and thrilled with passion,
Hailed a god more merciful than Time.

9.

Ah! less mighty, less than Time prevailing,
Shrunk, expelled, made nothing at his nod,
Less than clouds across the sea-line sailing,
Lies he, stricken by his master's rod.
"Where is man?" the cloister murmurs wailing;
Back the mute shrine thunders—"Where is God?"

10.

Here is all the end of all his glory,—
Dust, and grass, and barren silent stones.
Dead, like him, one hollow tower and hoary
Naked in the sea-wind stands and moans,
Filled and thrilled with its perpetual story:
Here, where earth is dense with dead men's bones.

11.

Low and loud and long, a voice forever,
Sounds the wind's clear story like a song.
Tomb from tomb the waves devouring sever,
Dust from dust as years relapse along;
Graves where men made sure to rest, and never
Lie dismantled by the seasons' wrong.

12.

Now displaced, devoured and desecrated,
Now by Time's hands darkly disinterred,
These poor dead that sleeping here awaited
Long the archangel's re-creating word,
Closed about with roofs and walls high-gated
Till the blast of judgment should be heard.

13.

Naked, shamed, cast out of consecration,
Corpse and coffin, yea, the very graves,
Scoffed at, scattered, shaken from their station,
Spurned and scourged of wind and sea like slaves,
Desolate beyond man's desolation,
Shrink and sink into the waste of waves.

14.

Tombs, with bare white piteous bones protruded,
Shroudless, down the loose collapsing banks,
Crumble, from their constant place detruded,
That the sea devours and gives not thanks.
Graves where hope and prayer and sorrow brooded
Gape and slide and perish, ranks on ranks.

15.

Rows on rows, and line by line they crumbled,
They that thought for all time through to be.
Scarce a stone whereon a child might stumble,
Breaks the grim field paced alone of me.
Earth, and man, and all their gods wax humble,
Here, where Time brings pasture to the sea.

VII.

1.

But afar on the headland exalted,
But beyond in the curl of the bay,
From the depth of his dome deep-vaulted,
Our father is lord of the day.
Our father and lord that we follow,
For deathless and ageless is he ;
And his robe is the whole sky's hollow,
His sandal the sea.

2.

Where the horn of the headland is sharper,
And her green floor glitters with fire,

The sea has the sun for a harper,
  The sun has the sea for a lyre.
The waves are a pavement of amber,
  By the feet of the sea-winds trod,
To receive in a god's presence-chamber
    Our father, the god.

3.

Time, haggard and changeful and hoary,
  Is master and god of the land :
But the air is fulfilled of the glory
  That is shed from our lord's right hand.
O father of all of us ever,
  All glory be only to thee
From heaven, that is void of thee never,
    And earth, and the sea.

4.

O Sun ! whereof all is beholden,
  Behold now the shadow of this death,
This place of the sepulchres, olden
  And emptied and vain as a breath,
The bloom of the bountiful heather
  Laughs broadly beyond in thy light,
As dawn, with her glories to gather,
    At darkness and night.

5.

Though the gods of the night lie rotten,
  And their honor be taken away,
And the noise of their names forgotten,
  Thou, Lord, art god of the day.
Thou art father, and saviour, and spirit,
  O Sun, of the soul that is free,
And hath grace of thy grace to inherit
    Thine earth and thy sea.

6.

The hills and the sands and the beaches,
  The waters adrift and afar,
The banks and the creeks and the reaches,
  How glad of thee all these are !

The flowers, overflowing, overcrowded,
Are drunk with the mad wind's mirth:
The delight of thy coming unclouded
Makes music of earth.

7.

I, last least voice of her voices,
Give thanks that were mute in me long
To the soul in my soul that rejoices
For the song that is over my song.
Time gives what he gains for the giving,
Or takes for his tribute of me;
My dreams to the wind ever-living,
My song to the sea.

ANACTORIA.

My life is bitter with thy love; thine eyes
Blind me, thy tresses burn me, thy sharp sighs
Divide my flesh and spirit with soft sound,
And my blood strengthens, and my veins abound.
I pray thee sigh not, speak not, draw not breath;
Let life burn down, and dream it is not death.
I would the sea had hidden us, the fire
(Wilt thou fear that, and fear not my desire?)
Severed the bones that bleach, the flesh that cleaves,
And let our sifted ashes drop like leaves.
I feel thy blood against my blood: my pain
Pains thee, and lips bruise lips, and vein stings vein.
Let fruit be crushed on fruit, let flower on flower,
Breast kindle breast, and either burn one hour.
Why wilt thou follow lesser loves? are thine
Too weak to bear these hands and lips of mine?
I charge thee for my life's sake, O too sweet
To crush love with thy cruel faultless feet,
I charge thee keep thy lips from hers or his,
Sweetest, till theirs be sweeter than my kiss:
Lest I too lure, a swallow for a dove,
Erotion or Erinna to my love.
I would my love could kill thee; I am satiated
With seeing thee live, and fain would have thee dead.

I would earth had thy body as fruit to eat,
And no mouth but some serpent's found thee sweet.
I would find grievous ways to have thee slain,
Intense device, and superflux of pain;
Vex thee with amorous agonies, and shake
Life at thy lips, and leave it there to ache;
Strain out thy soul with pangs too soft to kill,
Intolerable interludes, and infinite ill;
Relapse and reluctation of the breath,
Dumb tunes and shuddering semitones of death.
I am weary of all thy words and soft strange ways,
Of all love's fiery nights and all his days,
And all the broken kisses salt as brine
That shuddering lips make moist with waterish wine,
And eyes the bluer for all those hidden hours
That pleasure fills with tears and feeds from flowers,
Fierce at the heart with fire that half comes through,
But all the flower-like white stained round with blue;
The fervent underlid, and that above
Lifted with laughter or abashed with love;
Thine amorous girdle, full of thee and fair,
And leavings of the lilies in thine hair.
Yea, all sweet words of thine and all thy ways,
And all the fruit of nights and flower of days,
And stinging lips wherein the hot sweet brine
That love was born of burns and foams like wine,
And eyes insatiable of amorous hours,
Fervent as fire and delicate as flowers,
Colored like night at heart, but cloven through
Like night with flame, dyed round like night with blue,
Clothed with deep eyelids under and above—
Yea, all thy beauty sickens me with love;
Thy girdle empty of thee and now not fair,
And ruinous lilies in thy languid hair.
Ah, take no thought for Love's sake; shall this be,
And she who loves thy lover not love thee?
Sweet soul, sweet mouth of all that laughs and lives,
Mine is she, very mine; and she forgives.
For I beheld in sleep the light that is
In her high place in Paphos, heard the kiss
Of body and soul that mix with eager tears
And laughter stinging through the eyes and ears;

Saw Love, as burning flame from crown to feet,
Imperishable, upon her storied seat ;
Clear eyelids lifted toward the north and south,
A mind of many colors, and a mouth
Of many tunes and kisses ; and she bowed,
With all her subtle face laughing aloud,
Bowed down upon me, saying, "Who doth thee wrong,
Sappho ?" but thou—thy body is the song,
Thy mouth the music ; thou art more than I,
Though my voice die not till the whole world die ;
Though men that hear it madden ; though love weep,
Though nature change, though shame be charmed to sleep.
Ah, wilt thou slay me lest I kiss thee dead ?
Yet the queen laughed from her sweet heart and said :
"Even she that flies shall follow for thy sake,
And she shall give thee gifts that would not take,
Shall kiss that would not kiss thee" (yea, kiss me)
"When thou wouldst not"—when I would not kiss thee !
Ah, more to me than all men as thou art,
Shall not my songs assuage her at the heart ?
Ah, sweet to me as life seems sweet to death,
Why should her wrath fill thee with fearful breath ?
Nay, sweet, for is she God alone ? hath she
Made earth and all the centuries of the sea,
Taught the sun ways to travel, woven most fine
The moonbeams, shed the starbeams forth as wine,
Bound with her myrtles, beaten with her rods,
The young men and the maidens and the gods ?
Have we not lips to love with, eyes for tears,
And summer and flower of women and of years ?
Stars for the foot of morning, and for noon
Sunlight, and exaltation of the moon ;
Waters that answer waters, fields that wear
Lilies, and languor of the Lesbian air ?
Beyond those flying feet of fluttered doves,
Are there not other gods for other loves ?
Yea, though she scourge thee, sweetest, for my sake,
Blossom not thorns, and flowers not blood should break.

Ah that my lips were tuneless lips, but pressed
To the bruised blossom of thy scourged white breast;
Ah that my mouth for Muses' milk were fed
On the sweet blood thy sweet small wounds had bled!
That with my tongue I felt them, and could taste
The faint flakes from thy bosom to the waist!
That I could drink thy veins as wine, and eat
Thy breasts like honey! that from face to feet
Thy body were abolished and consumed,
And in my flesh thy very flesh entombed!
Ah, ah, thy beauty! like a beast it bites,
Stings like an adder, like an arrow smites.
Ah sweet, and sweet again, and seven times sweet,
The paces and the pauses of thy feet!
Ah sweeter than all sleep or summer air
The fallen fillets fragrant from thine hair!
Yea, though their alien kisses do me wrong,
Sweeter thy lips than mine with all their song;
Thy shoulders whiter than a fleece of white,
And flower-sweet fingers, good to bruise or bite
As honeycomb of the inmost honey-cells,
With almond-shaped and roseleaf-colored shells,
And blood like purple blossom at the tips
Quivering; and pain made perfect in thy lips
For my sake when I hurt thee; O that I
Durst crush thee out of life with love, and die,
Die of thy pain and my delight, and be
Mixed with thy blood and molten into thee!
Would I not plague thee dying overmuch?
Would I not hurt thee perfectly? not touch
Thy pores of sense with torture, and make bright
Thine eyes with bloodlike tears and grievous light!
Strike pang from pang as note is struck from note.
Catch the sob's middle music in thy throat,
Take thy limbs living, and new-mould with these
A lyre of many faultless agonies?
Feed thee with fever and famine and fine drouth,
With perfect pangs convulse thy perfect mouth,
Make thy life shudder in thee and burn afresh,
And wring thy very spirit through the flesh?
Cruel? but love makes all that love him well
As wise as heaven and crueller than hell.
Me hath love made more bitter toward thee

Than death toward man ; but were I made as he
Who hath made all things to break them one by one.
If my feet trod upon the stars and sun
And souls of men as his have alway trod,
God knows I might be crueller than God.
For who shall change with prayers or thanksgivings
The mystery of the cruelty of things ?
Or say what God above all gods and years,
With offering and blood-sacrifice of tears,
With lamentation from strange lands, from graves
Where the snake pastures, from scarred mouth of slaves
From prison, and from plunging prows of ships
Through flamelike foam of the sea's closing lips—
With thwartings of strange signs, and wind-blown hair
Of comets, desolating the dim air,
When darkness is made fast with seals and bars,
And fierce reluctance of disastrous stars,
Eclipse, and sound of shaken hills, and wings
Darkening, and blind inexpiable things—
With sorrow of laboring moons, and altering light
And travail of the planets of the night,
And weeping of the weary Pleiads seven,
Feeds the mute melancholy lust of heaven ?
Is not this incense bitterness, his meat
Murder ? his hidden face and iron feet
Hath not man known, and felt them on their way
Threaten and trample all things and every day ?
Hath he not sent us hunger ? who hath cursed
Spirit and flesh with longing ? filled with thirst
Their lips who cried unto him ? who bade exceed
The fervid will, fall short the feeble deed,
Bade sink the spirit and the flesh aspire,
Pain animate the dust of dead desire,
And life yield up her flower to violent fate ?
Him would I reach, him smite, him desecrate,
Pierce the cold lips of God with human breath,
And mix his immortality with death.
Why hath he made us ? what had all we done
That we should live and loathe the sterile sun,
And with the moon wax paler as she wanes,
And pulse by pulse feel time grow through our veins ?
Thee too the years shall cover ; thou shalt be
As the rose born of one same blood with thee,

As a song sung, as a word said, and fall
Flower-wise, and be not any more at all,
Nor any memory of thee anywhere;
For never Muse has bound above thine hair
The high Pierian flowers whose graft outgrows
All summer kinship of the mortal rose
And color of deciduous days, nor shed
Reflex and flush of heaven about thine head,
Nor reddened brows made pale by floral grief
With splendid shadow from that lordlier leaf.
Yea, thou shalt be forgotten like spilt wine,
Except these kisses of my lips on thine
Brand them with immortality; but me—
Men shall not see bright fire nor hear the sea,
Nor mix their hearts with music, nor behold
Cast forth of heaven with feet of awful gold
And plumeless wings that make the bright air blind,
Lightning, with thunder for a hound behind
Hunting through fields unfurrowed and unsown—
But in the light and laughter, in the moan
And music, and in grasp of lip and hand
And shudder of water that makes felt on land
The immeasurable tremor of all the sea,
Memories shall mix and metaphors of me.
Like me shall be the shuddering calm of night,
When all the winds of the world for pure delight
Close lips that quiver and fold up wings that ache;
When nightingales are louder for love's sake,
And leaves tremble like lute-strings or like fire;
Like me the one star swooning with desire
Even at the cold lips of the sleepless moon,
As I at thine; like me the waste white noon,
Burnt through with barren sunlight; and like me
The land-stream and the tide-stream in the sea.
I am sick with time as these ebb and flow,
And by the yearning in my veins I know
The yearning sound of waters; and mine eyes
Burn as that beamless fire which fills the skies
With troubled stars and travailing things of flame;
And in my heart the grief consuming them
Labors, and in my veins the thirst of these,
And all the summer travail of the trees
And all the winter sickness; and the earth,

Filled full with deadly works of death and birth,
Sore spent with hungry lusts of birth and death,
Has pain like mine in her divided breath;
Her spring of leaves is barren, and her fruit
Ashes; her boughs are burdened, and her root
Fibrous and gnarled with poison; underneath
Serpents have gnawn it through with tortuous teeth
Made sharp upon the bones of all the dead,
And wild birds rend her branches overhead.
These, woven as raiment for his word and thought,
These hath God made, and me as these, and wrought
Song, and hath lit it at my lips; and me
Earth shall not gather though she feed on thee.
As a shed tear shalt thou be shed; but I—
Lo, earth may labor, men live long and die,
Years change and stars, and the high God devise
New things, and old things wane before his eyes
Who wields and wrecks them, being more strong than
they—
But, having made me, me he shall not slay.
Nor slay nor satiate, like those herds of his
Who laugh and live a little, and their kiss
Contents them, and their loves are swift and sweet,
And sure death grasps and gains them with slow feet,
Love they or hate they, strive or bow their knees—
And all these end; he hath his will of these.
Yea, but albeit he slay me, hating me—
Albeit he hide me in the deep dear sea
And cover me with cool wan foam, and ease
This soul of mine as any soul of these,
And give me water and great sweet waves, and make
The very sea's name lordlier for my sake,
The whole sea sweeter—albeit I die indeed
And hide myself and sleep and no man heed,
Of me the high God hath not all his will.
Blossom of branches, and on each high hill
Clear air and wind, and under in clamorous vales
Fierce noises of the fiery nightingales,
Buds burning in the sudden spring like fire,
The wan washed sand and the waves 'vain desire,
Sails seen like blown white flowers at sea, and words
That bring tears swiftest, and long notes of birds
Violently singing till the whole world sings—

I Sappho shall be one with all these things,
With all high things forever ; and my face
Seen once, my songs once heard in a strange place,
Cleave to men 's lives, and waste the days thereof
With gladness and much sadness and long love.
Yea, they shall say, earth's womb has borne in vain
New things, and never this best thing again ;
Borne days and men, borne fruits and wars and wine,
Seasons and songs, but no song more like mine.
And they shall know me as ye who have known me
here,
Last year when I loved Atthis, and this year
When I love thee ; and they shall praise me, and say
"She hath all time as all we have our day,
Shall she not live and have her will"—even I ?
Yea, though thou diest, I say I shall not die.
For these shall give me of their souls, shall give
Life, and the days and loves wherewith I live,
Shall quicken me with loving, fill with breath,
Save me and serve me, strive for me with death.
Alas, that neither moon nor snow nor dew
Nor all cold things can purge me wholly through,
Assuage me nor allay me nor appease,
Till supreme sleep shall bring me bloodless ease ;
Till time wax faint in all his periods ;
Till fate undo the bondage of the gods,
And lay, to slake and satiate me all through,
Lotus and Lethe on my lips like dew,
And shed around and over and under me
Thick darkness and the insuperable sea.

HYMN TO PROSERPINE.

(AFTER THE PROCLAMATION IN ROME OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.)

Vicisti, Galilæe.

I HAVE lived long enough, having seen one thing, that
love hath an end ;
Goddess and maiden and queen, be near me now and
befriend.
Thou art more than the day or the morrow, the
seasons that laugh or that weep ;

For these give joy and sorrow ; but thou, Proserpina, sleep.
Sweet is the treading of wine, and sweet the feet of the dove ;
But a goodlier gift is thine than foam of the grapes or love.
Yea, is not even Apollo, with hair and harpstring of gold,
A bitter God to follow, a beautiful God to behold ?
I am sick of singing : the bays burn deep and chafe: I am fain
To rest a little from praise and grievous pleasure and pain.
For the Gods we know not of, who give us our daily breath,
We know they are cruel as love or life, and lovely as death.
O Gods dethroned and deceased, cast forth, wiped out in a day !
From your wrath is the world released, redeemed from your chains, men say.
New Gods are crowned in the city ; their flowers have broken your rods ;
They are merciful, clothed with pity, the young compassionate Gods.
But for me their new device is barren, the days are bare ;
Things long past over suffice, and men forgotten that were.
Time and the Gods are at strife ; ye dwell in the midst thereof,
Draining a little life from the barren breasts of love.
I say to you, cease, take rest ; yea, I say to you all be at peace,
Till the bitter milk of her breast and the barren bosom shall cease.
Wilt thou yet take all, Galilean ? but these thou shalt not take,
The laurel, the palms and the pæan, the breast of the nymphs in the brake ;
Breasts more soft than a dove's, that tremble with tenderer breath ;

And all the wings of the Loves, and all the joy before death ;
All the feet of the hours that sound as a single lyre,
Dropped and deep in the flowers, with strings that flicker like fire,
More than these wilt thou give, things fairer than all these things ?
Nay, for a little we live, and life hath mutable wings.
A little while and we die ; shall life not thrive as it may ?
For no man under the sky lives twice, outliving his day.
And grief is a grievous thing, and a man hath enough of his tears :
Why should he labor, and bring fresh grief to blacken his years ?
Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean ; the world has grown gray from thy breath ;
We have drunken of things Lethean, and fed on the fulness of death.
Laurel is green for a season, and love is sweet for a day ;
But love grows bitter with treason, and laurel outlives not May.
Sleep, shall we sleep after all ? for the world is not sweet in the end ;
For the old faiths loosen and fall, the new years ruin and rend.
Fate is a sea without shore, and the soul is a rock that abides ;
But her ears are vexed with the roar and her face with the foam of the tides.
O lips that the live blood faints in, the leavings of rack and rods !
O ghastly glories of saints, dead limbs of gibbeted Gods !
Though all men abase them before you in spirits, and all knees bend,
I kneel not neither adore you, but standing, look to the end.
All delicate days and pleasant, all spirits and sorrows are cast

Far out with the foam of the present that sweeps to the surf of the past:
Where beyond the extreme sea-wall, and between the remote sea-gates,
Waste water washes, and tall ships founder, and deep death waits:
Where, mighty with deepening sides, clad about with the seas as with wings,
And impelled of invisible tides, fulfilled of unspeakable things,
White-eyed and poisonous-finned, shark-toothed and serpentine-curled,
Rolls, under the whitening wind of the future, the wave of the world.
The depths stand naked in sunder behind it, the storms flee away;
In the hollow before it the thunder is taken and snared as a prey;
In its sides is the north-wind bound; and its salt is of all men's tears;
With light of ruin, and sound of changes, and pulse of years:
With travail of day after day, and with trouble of hour upon hour;
And bitter as blood is the spray; and the crests are as fangs that devour:
And its vapor and storm of its steam as the sighing of spirits to be;
And its noise as the noise in a dream; and its depth as the roots of the sea:
And the height of its head as the height of the utmost stars of the air:
And the ends of the earth at the might thereof tremble, and time is made bare.
Will ye bridle the deep sea with reins, will ye chasten the high sea with rods?
Will ye take her to chain her with chains, who is older than all ye Gods?
All ye as a wind shall go by, as a fire shall ye pass and be past;
Ye are Gods, and behold, ye shall die, and the waves be upon you at last.

In the darkness of time, in the deeps of the years, in the changes of things,
Ye shall sleep as a slain man sleeps, and the world shall forget you for kings.
Though the feet of thine high priests tread where thy lords and our forefathers trod,
Though these that were Gods are dead, and thou being dead art a God,
Though before thee the throned Cytherean be fallen, and hidden her head,
Yet thy kingdom shall pass, Galilean, thy dead shall go down to the dead.
Of the maiden thy mother men sing as a goddess with grace clad around;
Thou art throned where another was king; where another was queen she is crowned.
Yea, once we had sight of another: but now she is queen, say these.
Not as thine, not as thine was our mother, a blossom of flowering seas,
Clothed round with the world's desire as with raiment, and fair as the foam,
And fleeter than kindled fire, and a goddess, and mother of Rome.
For thine came pale and a maiden, and sister to sorrow; but ours,
Her deep hair heavily laden with odor, and color of flowers,
White rose of the rose-white water, a silver splendor, a flame,
Bent down into us that besought her, and earth grew sweet with her name.
For thine came weeping, a slave among slaves, and rejected; but she
Came flushed from the full-flushed wave, and imperial, her foot on the sea.
And the wonderful waters knew her, the winds and the viewless ways,
And the roses grew rosier, and bluer the sea-blue stream of the bays.
Ye are fallen, our lords, by what token? we wist that ye should not fall.

Ye were all so fair that are broken ; and one more fair than ye all.
But I turn to her still, having seen she shall surely abide in the end ;
Goddess and maiden and queen, be near me now and befriend.
O daughter of earth, of my mother, her crown and blossom of birth,
I am also, I also thy brother ;I go as I came unto earth.
In the night where thine eyes are as moons are in heaven, the night where thou art,
Where the silence is more than all tunes, where sleep overflows from the heart,
Where the poppies are sweet as the rose in our world, and the red rose is white,
And the wind falls faint as it blows with the fume of the flowers of the night,
And the murmur of spirits that sleep in the shadow of Gods from afar
Grows dim in thine ears and deep as the deep dim soul of a star,
In the sweet low light of thy face, under heavens untrod by the sun,
Let my soul with their souls find place, and forget what is done and undone.
Thou art more than the Gods who number the days of our temporal breath ;
For these give labor and slumber ; but thou, Proserpina, death.
Therefore now at thy feet I abide for a season in silence. I know
I shall die as my fathers died, and sleep as they sleep ; even so.
For the glass of the years is brittle wherein we gaze for a span ;
A little soul for a little bears up this corpse which is man.*
So long I endure, no longer ; and laugh not again, neither weep.
For there is no God found stronger than death ; and death is a sleep.

* *ψυχάριον εἶ βαστάζον νεκρόν.* EPICTETUS.

ILICET.

THERE is an end of joy and sorrow ;
Peace all day long, all night, all morrow,
  But never a time to laugh or weep.
The end is come of pleasant places,
The end of tender words and faces,
  The end of all, the poppied sleep.

No place for sound within their hearing,
No room to hope, no time for fearing,
  No lips to laugh, no lids for tears.
The old years have run out all their measure ;
No chance of pain, no chance of pleasure,
  No fragment of the broken years.

Outside of all the worlds and ages,
There where the fool is as the sage is,
  There where the slayer is clean of blood,
No end, no passage, no beginning,
There where the sinner leaves off sinning,
  There where the good man is not good.

There is not one thing with another,
But Evil saith to Good : My brother,
  My brother, I am one with thee :
They shall not strive nor cry forever :
No man shall choose between them : never
  Shall this thing end and that thing be.

Wind wherein seas and stars are shaken
Shall shake them, and they shall not waken ;
  None that has lain down shall arise ;
The stones are sealed across their places ;
One shadow is shed on all their faces,
  One blindness cast on all their eyes.

Sleep, is it sleep perchance that covers
Each face, as each face were his lover's ?
  Farewell ; as men that sleep fare well.

The grave's mouth laughs unto derision,
Desire and dread and dream and vision,
  Delight of heaven and sorrow of hell.

No soul shall tell nor lip shall number
The names and tribes of you that slumber;
  No memory, no memorial.
"Thou knowest"—who shall say thou knowest
There is none highest and none lowest:
  An end, an end, an end of all.

Good night, good sleep, good rest from sorrow,
To these that shall not have good morrow;
  The gods be gentle to all these.
Nay, if death be not, how shall they be?
Nay, is there help in heaven? it may be
  All things and lords of things shall cease.

The stooped urn, filling, dips and flashes;
The bronzèd brims are deep in ashes;
  The pale old lips of death are fed.
Shall this dust gather flesh hereafter?
Shall one shed tears or fall to laughter,
  At sight of all these poor old dead?

Nay, as thou wilt; these know not of it;
Thine eye's strong weeping shall not profit,
  Thy laughter shall not give thee ease;
Cry aloud, spare not, cease not crying,
Sigh, till thou cleave thy sides with sighing,
  Thou shalt not raise up one of these.

Burnt spices flash, and burnt wine hisses,
The breathing flame's mouth curls and kisses
  The small dried rows of frankincense;
All round the sad red blossoms smoulder,
Flowers colored like the fire, but colder,
  In sign of sweet things taken hence;

Yea, for their sake and in death's favor
Things of sweet shape and of sweet savor
  We yield them, spice and flower and wine;

Yea, costlier things than wine or spices,
Whereof none knoweth how great the price is,
And fruit that comes not of the vine.

From boy's pierced throat and girl's pierced bosom
Drips, reddening round the blood-red blossom,
The slow delicious bright soft blood,
Bathing the spices and the pyre,
Bathing the flowers and fallen fire,
Bathing the blossom by the bud.

Roses whose lips the flame has deadened
Drink till the lapping leaves are reddened
And warm wet inner petals weep;
The flower whereof sick sleep gets leisure,
Barren of balm and purple pleasure,
Fumes with no native steam of sleep.

Why will ye weep? what do ye weeping?
For waking folk and people sleeping,
And sands that fill and sands that fall,
The days rose-red, the poppied hours,
Blood, wine, and spice and fire and flowers,
There is one end of one and all.

Shall such an one lend love or borrow?
Shall these be sorry for thy sorrow?
Shall these give thanks for words or breath?
There hate is as their loving-kindness;
The frontlet of their brows is blindness,
The armlet of their arms is death.

Lo, for no noise or light of thunder
Shall these grave-clothes be rent in sunder,
He that hath taken, shall he give?
He hath rent them: shall he bind together?
He hath bound them: shall he break the tether?
He hath slain them: shall he bid them live?

A little sorrow, a little pleasure,
Fate metes us from the dusty measure
That holds the date of all of us;

We are born with travail and strong crying,
And from the birthday to the dying
The likeness of our life is thus.

One girds himself to serve another,
Whose father was the dust, whose mother
The little dead red worm therein;
They find no fruit of things they cherish;
The goodness of a man shall perish,
It shall be one thing with his sin.

In deep wet ways by gray old gardens
Fed with sharp spring the sweet fruit hardens;
They know not what fruits wane or grow;
Red summer burns to the utmost ember;
They know not, neither can remember,
The old years and flowers they used to know.

Ah, for their sakes, so trapped and taken,
For theirs, forgotten and forsaken,
Watch, sleep not, gird thyself with prayer.
Nay, where the heart of wrath is broken,
Where long love ends as a thing spoken,
How shall thy crying enter there?

Though the iron sides of the old world falter
The likeness of them shall not alter
For all the rumor of periods,
The stars and seasons that come after,
The tears of latter men, the laughter
Of the old unalterable gods.

Far up above the years and nations,
The high gods, clothed and crowned with patience,
Endure through days of death-like date;
They bear the witness of things hidden;
Before their eyes all life stands chidden,
As they before the eyes of Fate.

Not for their love shall Fate retire,
Nor they relent for our desire,
Nor the graves open for their call.

The end is more than joy and anguish,
Than lives that laugh and lives that languish,
The poppied sleep, the end of all.

HERMAPHRODITUS.

I.

Lift up thy lips, turn round, look back for love,
Blind love that comes by night and casts out rest;
Of all things tired thy lips look weariest,
Save the long smile that they are wearied of.
Ah sweet, albeit no love be sweet enough,
Choose of two loves and cleave unto the best;
Two loves at either blossom of thy breast
Strive until one be under and one above.
Their breath is fire upon the amorous air,
Fire in thine eyes and where thy lips suspire:
And whosoever hath seen thee, being so fair,
Two things turn all his life and blood to fire;
A strong desire begot on great despair,
A great despair cast out by strong desire.

II.

Where between sleep and life some brief space is,
With love like gold bound round about the head,
Sex to sweet sex with lips and limbs is wed,
Turning the fruitful feud of hers and his
To the waste wedlock of a sterile kiss;
Yet from them something like as fire is shed
That shall not be assuaged till death be dead,
Though neither life nor sleep can find out this.
Love made himself of flesh that perisheth
A pleasure-house for all the loves his kin;
But on the one side sat a man like death,
And on the other a woman sat like sin.
So with veiled eyes and sobs between his breath
Love turned himself and would not enter in.

III.

Love, is it love or sleep or shadow or light
That lies between thine eyelids and thine eyes?
Like a flower laid upon a flower it lies,

Or like the night's dew laid upon the night.
Love stands upon thy left hand and thy right,
  Yet by no sunset and by no moonrise
  Shall make thee man and ease a woman's sighs,
Or make thee woman for a man's delight.
To what strange end hath some strange god made fair
  The double blossom of two fruitless flowers?
Hid love in all the folds of all thy hair,
  Fed thee on summers, watered thee with showers,
Given all the gold that all the seasons wear
  To thee that art a thing of barren hours?

IV.

Yea, love, I see; it is not love but fear.
  Nay, sweet, it is not fear but love, I know;
  Or wherefore should thy body's blossom blow
So sweetly, or thine eyelids leave so clear
Thy gracious eyes that never made a tear—
  Though for their love our tears like blood should flow,
  Though love and life and death should come and go,
So dreadful, so desirable, so dear?
Yea, sweet, I know; I saw in what swift wise
  Beneath the woman's and the water's kiss
  Thy moist limbs melted into Salmacis,
And the large light turned tender in thine eyes,
And all thy boy's breath softened into sighs;
  But Love being blind, how should he know of this?

Au Musée du Louvre, Mars, 1863.

FRAGOLETTA.

O Love! what shall be said of thee?
The son of grief begot by joy?
Being sightless, wilt thou see?
Being sexless, wilt thou be
Maiden or boy?

I dreamed of strange lips yesterday
And cheeks wherein the ambiguous blood
Was like a rose's—yea,

A rose's when it lay
Within the bud.

What fields have bred thee, or what groves
Concealed thee, O mysterious flower,
O double rose of Love's,
With leaves that lure the doves
From bud to bower?

I dare not kiss it, lest my lip
Press harder than an indrawn breath,
And all the sweet life slip
Forth, and the sweet leaves drip,
Bloodlike, in death.

O sole desire of my delight!
O sole delight of my desire!
Mine eyelids and eyesight
Feed on thee day and night
Like lips of fire.

Lean back thy throat of carven pearl,
Let thy mouth murmur like the dove's;
Say, Venus hath no girl,
No front of female curl,
Among her Loves.

Thy sweet low bosom, thy close hair,
Thy strait soft flanks and slenderer feet,
Thy virginal strange air,
Are these not over fair
For Love to greet?

How should he greet thee? what new name,
Fit to move all men's hearts, could move
Thee, deaf to love or shame,
Love's sister, by the same
Mother as Love?

Ah sweet, the maiden's mouth is cold,
Her breast-blossoms are simply red,
Her hair mere brown or gold,
Fold over simple fold
Binding her head.

Thy mouth is made of fire and wine,
Thy barren bosom takes my kiss
And turns my soul to thine
And turns thy lip to mine,
And mine it is.

Thou hast a serpent in thine hair,
In all the curls that close and cling ;
And ah, thy breast-flower !
Ah love, thy mouth too fair
To kiss and sing !

Cleave to me, love me, kiss mine eyes,
Satiate thy lips with loving me ;
Nay, for thou shalt not rise ;
Lie still as Love that dies
For love of thee.

Mine arms are close about thine head,
My lips are fervent on thy face,
And where my kiss hath fed
Thy flower-like blood leaps red
To the kissed place.

O bitterness of things too sweet
O broken singing of the dove !
Love's wings are over fleet,
And like the panther's feet
The feet of Love.

IN THE ORCHARD.

(PROVENÇAL BURDEN.)

LEAVE go my hands, let me catch breath and see ;
Let the dew-fall drench either side of me ;
  Clear apple-leaves are soft upon that moon
Seen sidelong like a blossom in the tree ;
  Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

The grass is thick and cool, it lets us lie.
Kissed upon either cheek and either eye,
  I turn to thee as some green afternoon

Turns toward sunset, and is loath to die ;
Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

Lie closer, lean your face upon my side,
Feel where the dew fell that has hardly dried,
Hear how the blood beats that went nigh to swoon ;
The pleasure lives there when the sense has died ;
Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

O my fair lord, I charge you leave me this :
Is it not sweeter than a foolish kiss ?
Nay take it then, my flower, my first in June,
My rose, so like a tender mouth it is :
Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

Love, till dawn sunder night from day with fire,
Dividing my delight and my desire,
The crescent life and love the plenilune,
Love me though dusk begin and dark retire ;
Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

Ah, my heart fails, my blood draws back ; I know,
When life runs over, life is near to go ;
And with the slain of love love's ways are strewn,
And with their blood, if love will have it so ;
Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

Ah, do thy will now ; slay me if thou wilt ;
There is no building now the walls are built,
No quarrying now the corner-stone is hewn,
No drinking now the vine's whole blood is spilt ;
Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

Nay, slay me now ; nay, for I will be slain ;
Pluck thy red pleasure from the teeth of pain,
Break down thy vine ere yet grape-gatherers prune,
Slay me ere day can slay desire again ;
Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

Yea, with thy sweet lips, thy sweet sword ; yea,
Take life and all, for I will die, I say ;
Love, I gave love, is life a better boon ?
For sweet night's sake I will not live till day ;
Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

Nay, I will sleep then only ; nay, but go.
Ah sweet, too sweet to me, my sweet, I know
  Love, sleep, and death go to the sweet same tune ;
Hold my hair fast, and kiss me through it so,
  Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

A MATCH.

If love were what the rose is,
  And I were like the leaf,
Our lives would grow together
In sad or singing weather,
Blown fields or flowerful closes,
  Green pleasure or gray grief ;
If love were what the rose is,
  And I were like the leaf.

If I were what the words are,
  And love were like the tune,
With double sound and single
Delight our lips would mingle,
With kisses glad as birds are
  That get sweet rain at noon ;
If I were what the words are
  And love were like the tune.

If you were life, my darling,
  And I your love were death,
We'd shine and snow together
Ere March made sweet the weather
With daffodil and starling
  And hours of fruitful breath ;
If you were life, my darling,
  And I your love were death.

If you were thrall to sorrow,
  And I were page to joy,
We'd play for lives and seasons
With loving looks and treasons
And tears of night and morrow
  And laughs of maid and boy ;
If you were thrall to sorrow,
  And I were page to joy.

If you were April's lady,
And I were lord in May,
We'd throw with leaves for hours
And draw for days with flowers,
Till day like night were shady
And night were bright like day;
If you were April's lady,
And I were lord in May.

If you were queen of pleasure,
And I were king of pain,
We'd hunt down love together,
Pluck out his flying feather,
And teach his feet a measure,
And find his mouth a rein;
If you were queen of pleasure,
And I were king of pain.

FAUSTINE.

Ave Faustina Imperatrix, morituri te salutant.

Lean back, and get some minutes' peace;
Let your head lean
Back to the shoulder with its fleece
Of locks, Faustine.

The shapely silver shoulder stoops,
Weighed over clean
With state of splendid hair that droops
Each side, Faustine.

Let me go over your good gifts
That crown you queen;
A queen whose kingdom ebbs and shifts
Each week, Faustine.

Bright heavy brows well gathered up:
White gloss and sheen;
Carved lips that make my lips a cup
To drink, Faustine.

Wine and rank poison, milk and blood,
Being mixed therein
Since first the devil threw dice with God
For you, Faustine.

Your naked new-born soul, their stake,
Stood blind between;
God said "let him that wins her take
And keep Faustine."

But this time Satan throve, no doubt:
Long since, I ween,
God's part in you was battered out;
Long since, Faustine.

The die rang sideways as it fell,
Rang cracked and thin,
Like a man's laughter heard in hell
Far down, Faustine.

A shadow of laughter like a sigh,
Dead sorrow's kin;
So rang, thrown down, the devil's die
That won Faustine.

A suckling of his breed you were,
One hard to wean;
But God, who lost you, left you fair,
We see, Faustine.

You have the face that suits a woman
For her soul's screen—
The sort of beauty that's called human
In hell, Faustine.

You could do all things but be good
Or chaste of mien;
And that you would not if you could,
We know, Faustine.

Even he who cast seven devils out
Of Magdalene
Could hardly do as much, I doubt,
For you, Faustine.

Did Satan make you to spite God?
Or did God mean
To scourge with scorpions for a rod
Our sins, Faustine?

I know what queen at first you were,
As though I had seen
Red gold and black imperious hair
Twice crown Faustine.

As if your fed sarcophagus
Spared flesh and skin,
You come back face to face with us
The same Faustine.

She loved the games men played with death,
Where death must win;
As though the slain man's blood and breath
Revived Faustine.

Nets caught the pike, pikes tore the net;
Lithe limbs and lean
From drained-out pores dripped thick red sweat
To soothe Faustine.

She drank the steaming drift and dust
Blown off the scene;
Blood could not ease the bitter lust
That galled Faustine.

All round the foul fat furrows reeked,
Where blood sank in;
The circus splashed and seethed and shrieked
All round Faustine.

But these are gone now: years entomb
The dust and din;
Yea, even the bath's fierce reek and fume
That slew Faustine.

Was life worth living then? and now
Is life worth sin?
Where are the imperial years? and how
Are you, Faustine?

Your soul forgot her joys, forgot
  Her times of teen ;
Yea, this life likewise will you not
  Forget, Faustine ?

For in the time we know not of
  Did fate begin
Weaving the web of days that wove
  Your doom, Faustine.

The threads were wet with wine, and all
  Were smooth to spin ;
They wove you like a Bacchanal,
  The first Faustine.

And Bacchus cast your mates and you
  Wild grapes to glean ;
Your flower-like lips were dashed with dew
  From his, Faustine.

Your drenched loose hands were stretched to hold
  The vine's wet green,
Long ere they coined in Roman gold
  Your face, Faustine.

Then after change of soaring feather
  And winnowing fin,
You woke in weeks of feverish weather,
  A new Faustine.

A star upon your birthday burned,
  Whose fierce serene
Red pulseless planet never yearned
  In heaven, Faustine.

Stray breaths of Sapphic song that blew
  Through Mitylene
Shook the fierce quivering blood in you
  By night, Faustine.

The shameless nameless love that makes
  Hell's iron gin
Shut on you like a trap that breaks
  The soul, Faustine.

And when your veins were void and dead,
What ghosts unclean
Swarmed round the straitened barren bed
That hid Faustine?

What sterile growths of sexless root
Or epicene?
What flower of kisses without fruit
Of love, Faustine?

What adders came to shed their coats?
What coiled obscene
Small serpents with soft stretching throats
Caressed Faustine?

But the time came of famished hours,
Maimed loves and mean,
This ghastly thin-faced time of ours,
To spoil Faustine.

You seem a thing that hinges hold,
A love-machine
With clockwork joints of supple gold
No more, Faustine.

Not godless, for you serve one God,
The Lampsacene,
Who metes the gardens with his rod;
Your lord, Faustine.

If one should love you with real love
(Such things have been,
Things your fair face knows nothing of,
It seems, Faustine);

That clear hair heavily bound back,
The lights wherein
Shift from dead blue to burnt-up black:
Your throat, Faustine,

Strong, heavy, throwing out the face
And hard bright chin
And shameful scornful lips that grace
Their shame, Faustine,

Curled lips, long since half kissed away,
Still sweet and keen;
You'd give him—poison shall we say?
Or what, Faustine?

A CAMEO.

There was a graven image of Desire
Painted with red blood on a ground of gold
Passing between the young men and the old,
And by him Pain, whose body shone like fire,
And Pleasure with gaunt hands that grasped their hire.
Of his left wrist, with fingers clenched and cold,
The insatiable Satiety kept hold,

Walking with feet unshod that plashed the mire.
The senses and the sorrows and the sins,
And the strange loves that suck the breasts of Hate
Till lips and teeth bite in their sharp indenture,
Followed like beasts with flap of wings and fins.
Death stood aloof behind a gaping grate,
Upon whose lock was written *Peradventure.*

STAGE LOVE.

When the game began between them for a jest,
He played king and she played queen to match the best;
Laughter soft as tears, and tears that turned to laughter,
These were things she sought for years and sorrowed after.

Pleasure with dry lips, and pain that walks by night;
All the sting and all the stain of long delight;
These were things she knew not of, that knew not of her,
When she played at half a love with half a lover.

Time was chorus, gave them cues to laugh or cry;
They would kill, befool, amuse him, let him die;
Set him webs to weave to-day and break to-morrow,
Till he died for good in play, and rose in sorrow.

What the years mean; how time dies and is not slain;
How love grows and laughs and cries and wanes again;
These were things she came to know, and take their measure,
When the play was played out so for one man's pleasure.

THE LEPER.

Nothing is better, I well think,
Than love; the hidden well-water
Is not so delicate to drink:
This was well seen of me and her.

I served her in a royal house;
I served her wine and curious meat
For will to kiss between her brows
I had no heart to sleep or eat.

Mere scorn God knows she had of me;
A poor scribe, nowise great or fair,
Who plucked his clerk's hood back to see
Her curled-up lips and amorous hair.

I vex my head with thinking this.
Yea, though God always hated me,
And hates me now that I can kiss
Her eyes, plait up her hair to see

How she then wore it on the brows,
Yet am I glad to have her dead
Here in this wretched wattled house
Where I can kiss her eyes and head.

Nothing is better, I well know,
Than love; no amber in cold sea
Or gathered berries under snow:
That is well seen of her and me.

Three thoughts I make my pleasure of:
First I take heart and think of this:
That knight's gold hair she chose to love,
His mouth she had such will to kiss.

Then I remember that sundawn
I brought him by a privy way
Out at her lattice, and thereon
What gracious words she found to say.

(Cold rushes for such little feet—
Both feet could lie into my hand.
A marvel was it of my sweet
Her upright body could so stand.)

"Sweet friend, God give you thank and grace
Now am I clean and whole of shame,
Nor shall men burn me in the face
For my sweet fault that scandals them."

I tell you over word by word.
She, sitting edgewise on her bed,
Holding her feet, said thus. The third,
A sweeter thing than these, I said.

God, that makes time and ruins it,
And alters not, abiding God,
Changed with disease her body sweet,
The body of love wherein she abode.

Love is more sweet and comelier
Than a dove's throat strained out to sing.
All they spat out and cursed at her
And cast her forth for a base thing.

They cursed her, seeing how God had wrought
This curse to plague her, a curse of his.
Fools were they surely, seeing not
How sweeter than all sweet she is.

He that had held her by the hair,
With kissing lips blinding her eyes,
Felt her bright bosom, strained and bare,
Sigh under him, with short mad cries

Out of her throat and sobbing mouth
And body broken up with love,
With sweet hot tears his lips were loath
Her own should taste the savor of,

Yea, he inside whose grasp all night
Her fervent body leapt or lay,
Stained with sharp kisses red and white,
Found her a plague to spurn away.

I hid her in this wattled house,
I served her water and poor bread.
For joy to kiss between her brows
Time upon time I was nigh dead.

Bread failed ; we got but well-water
And gathered grass with dropping seed.
I had such joy of kissing her,
I had small care to sleep or feed.

Sometimes when service made me glad
The sharp tears leapt between my lids,
Falling on her, such joy I had
To do the service God forbids.

" I pray you let me be at peace,
Get hence, make room for me to die."
She said that : her poor lip would cease,
Put up to mine, and turn to cry.

I said," Bethink yourself how love
Fared in us twain, what either did ;
Shall I unclothe my soul thereof ?
That I should do this, God forbid."

Yea, though God hateth us, he knows
That hardly in a little thing
Love faileth of the work it does
Till it grow ripe for gathering.

Six months, and now my sweet is dead
A trouble takes me ; I know not
If all were done well, all well said,
No word or tender deed forgot.

Too sweet, for the least part in her,
To have shed life out by fragments ; yet,
Could the close mouth catch breath and stir,
I might see something I forget.

Six months, and I sit still and hold
In two cold palms her cold two feet.
Her hair, half gray half ruined gold,
Thrills me and burns me in kissing it.

Love bites and stings me through, to see
Her keen face made of sunken bones.
Her worn-off eyelids madden me,
That were shot through with purple once.

She said," Be good with me ; I grow
So tired for shame's sake, I shall die
If you say nothing :" even so.
And she is dead now, and shame put by.

Yea, and the scorn she had of me
In the old time, doubtless vexed her then.
I never should have kissed her. See
What fools God's anger makes of men !

She might have loved me a little too,
Had I been humbler for her sake.
But that new shame could make love new
She saw not—yet her shame did make.

I took too much upon my love,
Having for such mean service done
Her beauty and all the ways thereof,
Her face and all the sweet thereon.

Yea, all this while I tended her,
I know the old love held fast his part :
I know the old scorn waxed heavier,
Mixed with sad wonder, in her heart.

It may be all my love went wrong—
A scribe's work writ awry and blurred,
Scrawled after the blind evensong—
Spoilt music with no perfect word.

But surely I would fain have done
All things the best I could. Perchance
Because I failed, came short of one,
She kept at heart that other man's.

I am grown blind with all these things:
It may be now she hath in sight
Some better knowledge; still there clings
The old question. Will not God do right?

DOLORES.

(NOTRE-DAME DES SEPT DOULEURS.)

Cold eyelids that hide like a jewel,
Hard eyes that grow soft for an hour;
The heavy white limbs, and the cruel
Red mouth like a venomous flower;
When these are gone by with their glories,
What shall rest of thee then, what remain,
O mystic and sombre Dolores,
Our Lady of Pain?

Seven sorrows the priests give their Virgin;
But thy sins, which are seventy times seven,
Seven ages would fail thee to purge in,
And then they would haunt thee in heaven:
Fierce midnights and famishing morrows,
And the loves that complete and control
All the joys of the flesh, all the sorrows
That wear out the soul.

O garment not golden but gilded;
O garden where all men may dwell,
O tower not of ivory, but builded
By hands that reach heaven from hell;
O mystical rose of the mire,
O house not of gold but of gain,
O house of unquenchable fire,
Our Lady of Pain!

O lips full of lust and of laughter,
Curled snakes that are fed from my breast,

Bite hard, lest remembrance come after
And press with new lips where you pressed.
For my heart too springs up at the pressure,
Mine eyelids too moisten and burn ;
Ah, feed me and fill me with pleasure,
Ere pain come in turn.

In yesterday's reach and to-morrow's,
Out of sight though they lie of to-day,
There have been and there yet shall be sorrows,
That smite not and bite not in play.
The life and the love thou despisest,
These hurt us indeed and in vain,
O wise among women, and wisest,
Our Lady of Pain.

Who gave thee thy wisdom ? what stories
That stung thee, what visions that smote ?
Wert thou pure and a maiden, Dolores,
When desire took thee first by the throat ?
What bud was the shell of a blossom
That all men may smell to and pluck ?
What milk fed thee first at what bosom ?
What sins gave thee suck ?

We shift and bedeck and bedrape us,
Thou art noble and nude and antique ;
Libitina thy mother, Priapu
Thy father, a Tuscan and Greek.
We play with light loves in the portal,
And wince and relent and refrain ;
Loves die, and we know thee immortal,
Our Lady of Pain.

Fruits fail and love dies and time ranges ;
Thou art fed with perpetual breath,
And alive after infinite changes,
And fresh from the kisses of death ;
Of languors rekindled and rallied,
Of barren delights and unclean,
Things monstrous and fruitless, a pallid
And poisonous queen.

Could you hurt me, sweet lips, though I hurt you?
Men touch them, and change in a trice
The lilies and languors of virtue
For the raptures and roses of vice;
Those lie where thy foot on the floor is,
These crown and caress thee and chain,
O splendid and sterile Dolores,
Our Lady of Pain.

There are sins it may be to discover,
There are deeds it may be to delight.
What new work wilt thou find for thy lover,
What new passions for daytime or night?
What spells that they know not a word of
Whose lives are as leaves overblown?
What tortures undreamt of, unheard of,
Unwritten, unknown?

Ah beautiful passionate body
That never has ached with a heart!
On thy mouth though the kisses are bloody,
Though they sting till it shudder and smart,
More kind than the love we adore is,
They hurt not the heart or the brain,
O bitter and tender Dolores,
Our Lady of Pain.

As our kisses relax and redouble,
From the lips and the foam and the fangs
Shall no new sin be born for men's trouble,
No dream of impossible pangs?
With the sweet of the sins of old ages
Wilt thou satiate thy soul as of yore?
Too sweet is the rind, say the sages,
Too bitter the core.

Hast thou told all thy secrets the last time,
And bared all thy beauties to one?
Ah, where shall we go then for pastime,
If the worst that can be has been done?
But sweet as the rind was the core is;
We are fain of thee still, we are fain,
O sanguine and subtle Dolores,
Our Lady of Pain.

By the hunger of change and emotion,
By the thirst of unbearable things,
By despair, the twin-born of devotion,
By the pleasure that winces and stings,
The delight that consumes the desire,
The desire that outruns the delight,
By the cruelty deaf as a fire
And blind as the night,

By the ravenous teeth that have smitten
Through the kisses that blossom and bud,
By the lips intertwisted and bitten
Till the foam has a savor of blood,
By the pulse as it rises and falters,
By the hands as they slacken and strain,
I adjure thee, respond from thine altars,
Our Lady of Pain.

Wilt thou smile as a woman disdaining
The light fire in the veins of a boy?
But he comes to thee sad, without feigning,
Who has wearied of sorrow and joy;
Less careful of labor and glory
Than the elders whose hair has uncurled;
And young, but with fancies as hoary
And gray as the world.

I have passed from the outermost portal
To the shrine where a sin is a prayer;
What care though the service be mortal?
O our Lady of Torture, what care?
All thine the last wine that I pour is,
The last in the chalice we drain,
O fierce and luxurious Dolores,
Our Lady of Pain.

All thine the new wine of desire,
The fruit of four lips as they clung
Till the hair and the eyelids took fire,
The foam of a serpentine tongue,
The froth of the serpents of pleasure,
More salt than the foam of the sea,
Now felt as a flame, now at leisure
As wine shed for me.

Ah thy people, thy children, thy chosen,
Marked cross from the womb and perverse!
They have found out the secret to cozen
The gods that constrain us and curse;
They alone, they are wise, and none other;
Give me place, even me, in their train,
O my sister, my spouse, and my mother,
Our Lady of Pain.

For the crown of our life as it closes
Is darkness, the fruit thereof dust;
No thorns go as deep as a rose's,
And love is more cruel than lust.
Time turns the old days to derision,
Our loves into corpses or wives;
And marriage and death and division
Make barren our lives.

And pale from the past we draw nigh thee,
And satiate with comfortless hours;
And we know thee, how all men belie thee,
And we gather the fruit of thy flowers;
The passion that slays and recovers,
The pangs and the kisses that rain
On the lips and the limbs of thy lovers,
Our Lady of Pain.

The desire of thy furious embraces
Is more than the wisdom of years,
On the blossom though blood lie in traces,
Though the foliage be sodden with tears.
For the lords in whose keeping the door is
That opens on all who draw breath
Gave the cypress to love, my Dolores,
The myrtle to death.

And they laughed, changing hands in the measure,
And they mixed and made peace after strife;
Pain melted in tears, and was pleasure;
Death tingled with blood, and was life.
Like lovers they melted and tingled,
In the dusk of thine innermost fane;
In the darkness they murmured and mingled,
Our Lady of Pain.

In a twilight where virtues are vices,
In thy chapels, unknown of the sun,
To a tune that enthralls and entices,
They were wed, and the twain were as one.
For the tune from thine altar hath sounded
Since God bade the world's work begin,
And the fume of thine incense abounded,
To sweeten the sin.

Love listens, and paler than ashes,
Through his curls as the crown on them slips,
Lifts languid wet eyelids and lashes,
And laughs with insatiable lips.
Thou shalt hush him with heavy caresses,
With music that scares the profane;
Thou shalt darken his eyes with thy tresses,
Our Lady of Pain.

Thou shalt blind his bright eyes though he wrestle,
Thou shalt chain his light limbs though he strive;
In his lips all thy serpents shall nestle,
In his hands all thy cruelties thrive.
In the daytime thy voice shall go through him,
In his dreams he shall feel thee and ache;
Thou shalt kindle by night and subdue him
Asleep and awake.

Thou shalt touch and make redder his roses
With juice not of fruit nor of bud;
When the sense in the spirit reposes,
Thou shalt quicken the soul through the blood.
Thine, thine the one grace we implore is,
Who would live and not languish or feign,
O sleepless and deadly Dolores,
Our Lady of Pain.

Dost thou dream, in a respite of slumber,
In a lull of the fires of thy life,
Of the days without name, without number,
When thy will stung the world into strife;
When, a goddess, the pulse of thy passion
Smote kings as they revelled in Rome;
And they hailed thee re-risen, O Thalassian,
Foam-white, from the foam?

When thy lips had such lovers to flatter;
  When the city lay red from thy rods
And thine hands were as arrows to scatter
  The children of change and their gods;
When the blood of thy foemen made fervent
  A sand never moist from the main,
As one smote them, their lord and thy servant,
  Our Lady of Pain.

On sands by the storm never shaken,
  Nor wet from the washing of tides;
Nor by foam of the waves overtaken,
  Nor winds that the thunder bestrides;
But red from the print of thy paces,
  Made smooth for the world and its lords,
Ringed round with a flame of fair faces,
  And splendid with swords.

There the gladiator, pale for thy pleasure,
  Drew bitter and perilous breath;
There torments laid hold on the treasure
  Of limbs too delicious for death;
When thy gardens were lit with live torches;
  When the world was a steed for thy rein;
When the nations lay prone in thy porches,
  Our Lady of Pain.

When, with flame all around him aspirant,
  Stood flushed, as a harp-player stands,
The implacable beautiful tyrant,
  Rose-crowned, having death in his hands;
And a sound as the sound of loud water
  Smote far through the flight of the fires,
And mixed with the lightning of slaughter
  A thunder of lyres.

Dost thou dream of what was and no more is,
  The old kingdoms of earth and the kings?
Dost thou hunger for these things, Dolores,
  For these, in a world of new things?
But thy bosom no fasts could emaciate,
  No hunger compel to complain
Those lips that no bloodshed could satiate,
  Our Lady of Pain.

As of old when the world's heart was lighter,
Through thy garments the grace of thee glows,
The white wealth of the body made whiter
By the blushes of amorous blows,
And seamed with sharp lips and fierce fingers,
And branded by kisses that bruise;
When all shall be gone that now lingers,
Ah, what shall we lose?

Thou wert fair in the fearless old fashion,
And thy limbs are as melodies yet,
And move to the music of passion
With lithe and lascivious regret.
What ailed us, O gods, to desert you
For creeds that refuse and restrain?
Come down and redeem us from virtue,
Our Lady of Pain.

All shrines that were Vestal are flameless;
But the flame has not fallen from this;
Though obscure be the god, and though nameless
The eyes and the hair that we kiss;
Low fires that love sits by and forges
Fresh heads for his arrows and thine;
Hair loosened and soiled in mid orgies
With kisses and wine.

Thy skin changes country and color,
And shrivels or swells to a snake's.
Let it brighten and bloat and grow duller,
We know it, the flames and the flakes,
Red brands on it smitten and bitten,
Round skies where a star is a stain,
And the leaves with thy litanies written,
Our Lady of Pain.

On thy bosom though many a kiss be,
There are none such as knew it of old.
Was it Alciphron once or Arisbe,
Male ringlets or feminine gold
That thy lips met with under the statue,
Whence a look shot out sharp after thieves
From the eyes of the garden-god at you
Across the fig-leaves?

Then still, through dry seasons and moister,
One god had a wreath to his shrine;
Then love was the pearl of his oyster,*
And Venus rose red out of wine.
We have all done amiss, choosing rather
Such loves as the wise gods disdain;
Intercede for us thou with thy father,
Our Lady of Pain.

In spring he had crowns of his garden
Red corn in the heat of the year,
Then hoary green olives that harden
When the grape-blossom freezes with fear,
And milk-budded myrtles with Venus
And vine-leaves with Bacchus he trod;
And ye said, "We have seen, he hath seen us,
A visible God."

What broke off the garlands that girt you?
What sundered you spirit and clay?
Weak sins yet alive are as virtue
To the strength of the sins of that day.
For dried is the blood of thy lover,
Ipsithilla, contracted the vein;
Cry aloud, "Will he rise and recover,
Our Lady of Pain?"

Cry aloud; for the old world is broken;
Cry out; for the Phrygian is priest,
And rears not the bountiful token
And spreads not the fatherly feast.
From the midmost of Ida, from shady
Recesses that murmur at morn,
They have brought and baptized her, Our Lady.
A goddess new-born.

And the chaplets of old are above us,
And the oyster-bed teems out of reach;
Old poets outsing and outlove us,
And Catullus makes mouths at our speech.

* "Nam te præcipuè in suis urbibus colit ora
Hellespontia, cæteris ostreosior oris."
CATULL. *Carm.* xviii.

Who shall kiss, in thy father's own city
With such lips as he sang with, again?
Intercede for us all of thy pity,
Our Lady of Pain.

Out of Dindymus heavily laden
Her lions draw bound and unfed
A mother, a mortal, a maiden,
A queen over death and the dead.
She is cold, and her habit is lowly,
Her temple of branches and sods;
Most fruitful and virginal, holy,
A mother of gods.

She hath wasted with fire thine high places,
She hath hidden and marred and made sad
The fair limbs of the Loves, the fair faces
Of gods that were goodly and glad.
She slays, and her hands are not bloody;
She moves as a moon in the wane,
White-robed, and thy raiment is ruddy,
Our Lady of Pain.

They shall pass and their places be taken,
The gods and the priests that are pure.
They shall pass, and shalt thou not be shaken?
They shall perish, and shalt thou endure?
Death laughs, breathing close and relentless
In the nostrils and eyelids of lust,
With a pinch in his fingers of scentless
And delicate dust.

But the worm shall revive thee with kisses,
Thou shalt change and transmute as a god,
As the rod to a serpent that hisses,
As the serpent again to a rod.
Thy life shall not cease though thou doff it;
Thou shalt live until evil be slain,
And good shall die first, said thy prophet,
Our Lady of Pain.

Did he lie? did he laugh? does he know it,
Now he lies out of reach, out of breath,

Thy prophet, thy preacher, thy poet,
Sin's child by incestuous Death?
Did he find out in fire at his waking,
Or discern as his eyelids lost light,
When the bands of the body were breaking
And all came in sight?

Who has known all the evil before us,
Or the tyrannous secrets of time?
Though we match not the dead men that bore us,
At a song, at a kiss, at a crime—
Though the heathen outface and outlive us,
And our lives and our longings are twain—
Ah, forgive us our virtues, forgive us,
Our Lady of Pain.

Who are we that embalm and embrace thee
With spices and savors of song?
What is time, that his children should face thee?
What am I, that my lips do thee wrong?
I could hurt thee—but pain would delight thee;
Or caress thee—but love would repel;
And the lovers whose lips would excite thee
Are serpents in hell.

Who now shall content thee as they did,
Thy lovers, when temples were built
And the hair of the sacrifice braided
And the blood of the sacrifice spilt,
In Lampsacus fervent with faces,
In Aphaca red from thy reign,
Who embraced thee with awful embraces,
Our Lady of Pain?

Where are they, Cotytto, or Venus,
Astarte or Ashtaroth, where?
Do their hands as we touch come between us?
Is the breath of them hot in thy hair?
From their lips have thy lips taken fever,
With the blood of their bodies grown red?
Hast thou left upon earth a believer
If these men are dead?

They were purple of raiment and golden,
Filled full of thee, fiery with wine,
Thy lovers, in haunts unbeholden,
In marvellous chambers of thine.
They are fled, and their footprints escape us,
Who appraise thee, adore, and abstain,
O daughter of Death and Priapus,
Our Lady of Pain.

What ails us to fear overmeasure,
To praise thee with timorous breath,
O mistress and mother of pleasure,
The one thing as certain as death?
We shall change as the things that we cherish,
Shall fade as they faded before,
As foam upon water shall perish,
As sand upon shore.

We shall know what the darkness discovers,
If the grave-pit be shallow or deep;
And our fathers of old, and our lovers,
We shall know if they sleep not or sleep.
We shall see whether hell be not heaven,
Find out whether tares be not grain.
And the joys of thee seventy times seven,
Our Lady of Pain.

HESPERIA.

Out of the golden remote wild west where the sea without shore is,
Full of the sunset, and sad, if at all, with the fulness of joy,
As a wind sets in with the autumn that blows from the region of stories,
Blows with a perfume of songs and of memories beloved from a boy,
Blows from the capes of the past oversea to the bays of the present,
Filled as with shadow of sound with the pulse of invisible feet,

Far out to the shallows and straits of the future, by rough ways or pleasant,
Is it thither the wind's wings beat ? is it hither to me, O my sweet ?
For thee, in the stream of the deep tide-wind blowing in with the water,
Thee I behold as a bird borne in with the wind from the west,
Straight from the sunset, across white waves whence rose as a daughter
Venus thy mother, in years when the world was a water at rest.
Out of the distance of dreams, as a dream that abides after slumber,
Strayed from the fugitive flock of the night, when the moon overhead
Wanes in the wan waste heights of the heaven, and stars without number
Die without sound, and are spent like lamps that are burnt by the dead,
Comes back to me, stays by me, lulls me with touch of forgotten caresses,
One warm dream clad about with a fire as of life that endures ;
The delight of thy face, and the sound of thy feet, and the wind of thy tresses,
And all of a man that regrets, and all of a maid that allures.
But thy bosom is warm for my face and profound as a manifold flower,
Thy silence as music, thy voice as an odor that fades in a flame ;
Not a dream, not a dream is the kiss of thy mouth, and the bountiful hour
That makes me forget what was sin, and would make me forget were it shame.
Thine eyes that are quiet, thine hands that are tender, thy lips that are loving,
Comfort and cool me as dew in the dawn of a moon like a dream ;
And my heart yearns baffled and blind, moved vainly toward thee, and moving

As the refluent seaweed moves in the languid exuberant stream,
Fair as a rose is on earth, as a rose under water in prison,
That stretches and swings to the slow passionate pulse of the sea,
Closed up from the air and the sun, but alive, as a ghost rearisen,
Pale as the love that revives as a ghost rearisen in me.
From the bountiful infinite west, from the happy memorial places
Full of the stately repose and the lordly delight of the dead,
Where the fortunate islands are lit with the light of ineffable faces,
And the sound of a sea without wind is about them, and sunset is red,
Come back to redeem and release me from love that recalls and represses,
That cleaves to my flesh as a flame, till the serpent has eaten his fill;
From the bitter delights of the dark, and the feverish, the furtive caresses
That murder the youth in a man or ever his heart have its will.
Thy lips cannot laugh and thine eyes cannot weep; thou art pale as a rose is,
Paler and sweeter than leaves that cover the blush of the bud;
And the heart of the flower is compassion, and pity the core it encloses,
Pity, not love, that is born of the breath and decays with the blood.
As the cross that a wild nun clasps till the edge of it bruises her bosom,
So love wounds as we grasp it, and blackens and burns as a flame;
I have loved overmuch in my life; when the live bud bursts with the blossom,
Bitter as ashes or tears is the fruit, and the wine thereof shame.

As a heart that its anguish divides is the green bud cloven asunder;
As the blood of a man self-slain is the flush of the leaves that allure;
And the perfume as poison and wine to the brain, a delight and a wonder;
And the thorns are too sharp for a boy, too slight for a man, to endure.
Too soon did I love it, and lost love's rose; and I cared not for glory's:
Only the blossoms of sleep and of pleasure were mixed in my hair.
Was it myrtle or poppy thy garland was woven with, O my Dolores?
Was it pallor of slumber, or blush as of blood, that I found in thee fair?
For desire is a respite from love, and the flesh not the heart is her fuel;
She was sweet to me once, who am fled and escaped from the rage of her reign;
Who behold as of old time at hand as I turn, with her mouth growing cruel,
And flushed as with wine with the blood of her lovers, Our Lady of Pain.
Low down where the thicket is thicker with thorns than with leaves in the summer,
In the brake is a gleaming of eyes and a hissing of tongues that I knew;
And the lithe long throats of her snakes reach round her, their mouths overcome her,
And her lips grow cool with their foam, made moist as a desert with dew.
With the thirst and the hunger of lust though her beautiful lips be so bitter,
With the cold foul foam of the snakes they soften and redden and smile;
And her fierce mouth sweetens, her eyes wax wide and her eyelashes glitter,
And she laughs with a savor of blood in her face, and a savor of guile.
She laughs, and her hands reach hither, her hair blows hither and hisses,

As a low-lit flame in a wind, back-blown till it shudder and leap ;
Let her lips not again lay hold on my soul,nor her poisonous kisses,
To consume it alive and divide from thy bosom, Our Lady of Sleep.
Ah daughter of sunset and slumber, if now it return into prison,
Who shall redeem it anew ? but we, if thou wilt, let us fly ;
Let us take to us, now that the white skies thrill with a moon unarisen,
Swift horses of fear or of love, take flight and depart and not die.
They are swifter than dreams, they are stronger than death; there is none that hath ridden,
None that shall ride in the dim strange ways of his life as we ride ;
By the meadows of memory, the highlands of hope, and the shore that is hidden,
Where life breaks loud and unseen, a sonorous invisible tide ,
By the sands where sorrow has trodden, the salt pools bitter and sterile,
By the thundering reef and the low sea-wall and the channel of years,
Our wild steeds press on the night, strain hard through pleasure and peril,
Labor and listen and pant not or pause for the peril that nears ;
And the sound of them trampling the way cleaves night as an arrow asunder,
And slow by the sand-hill and swift by the down with its glimpses of grass,
Sudden and steady the music, as eight hoofs trample and thunder,
Rings in the ear of the low blind wind of the night as we pass ;
Shrill shrieks in our faces the blind bland air that was mute as a maiden,
Stung into storm by the speed of our passage, and deaf where we past ;

And our spirits too burn as we bound, thine only but
mine heavy-laden,
As we burn with the fire of our flight; ah, love,
shall we win at the last?

FÉLISE.

Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?

What shall be said between us here
Among the downs, between the trees,
In fields that knew our feet last year,
In sight of quiet sands and seas,
This year, Félise?

Who knows what word were best to say?
For last year's leaves lie dead and red
On this sweet day, in this green May,
And barren corn makes bitter bread.
What shall be said?

Here as last year the fields begin,
A fire of flowers and glowing grass;
The old fields we laughed and lingered in,
Seeing each our souls in last year's glass,
Félise, alas!

Shall we not laugh, shall we not weep,
Not we, though this be as it is?
For love awake or love asleep
Ends in a laugh, a dream, a kiss,
A song like this.

I that have slept awake, and you
Sleep, who last year were well awake,
Though love do all that love can do,
My heart will never ache or break
For your heart's sake.

The great sea, faultless as a flower,
Throbs, trembling under beam and breeze,
And laughs with love of the amorous hour.
I found you fairer once, Félise,
Than flowers or seas.

We played at bondsman and at queen ;
But as the days change men change too ;
I find the gray sea's notes of green,
The green sea's fervent flakes of blue,
More fair than you.

Your beauty is not over fair
Now in mine eyes, who am grown up wise.
The smell of flowers in all your hair
Allures not now ; no sigh replies
If your heart sighs.

But you sigh seldom, you sleep sound,
You find love's new name good enough.
Less sweet I find it than I found
The sweetest name that ever love
Grew weary of.

My snake with bright bland eyes, my snake
Grown tame and glad to be caressed,
With lips athirst for mine to slake
Their tender fever ! who had guessed
You loved me best ?

I had died for this last year, to know
You loved me. Who shall turn on fate ?
I care not if love come or go
Now, though your love seek mine for mate.
It is too late.

The dust of many strange desires
Lies deep between us ; in our eyes
Dread smoke of perishable fires
Flickers, a fume in air and skies,
A steam of sighs.

You loved me and you loved me not ;
A little, much, and overmuch.
Will you forget as I forget ?
Let all dead things lie dead ; none such
Are soft to touch.

I love you and I do not love,
Too much, a little, not at all ;

Too much, and never yet enough.
Birds quick to fledge and fly at call
Are quick to fall.

And these love longer now than men,
And larger loves than ours are these.
No diver brings up love again
Dropped once, my beautiful Félise,
In such cold seas.

Gone deeper than all plummets sound,
Where in the dim green dayless day
The life of such dead things lies bound
As the sea feeds on, wreck and stray,
And castaway.

Can I forget? Yea, that can I,
And that can all men; so will you,
Alive, or later, when you die.
Ah, but the love you plead was true?
Was mine not too?

I loved you for that name of yours
Long ere we met, and long enough.
Now that one thing of all endures—
The sweetest name that ever love
Waxed weary of.

Like colors in the sea, like flowers,
Like a cat's splendid circle eyes
That wax and wane with love for hours,
Green as green flame, blue-gray like skies,
And soft like sighs—

And all these only like your name,
And your name full of all of these
I say it, and it sounds the same—
Save that I say it now at ease,
Your name, Félise.

I said "She must be swift and white,
And subtly warm, and half perverse,
And sweet like sharp soft fruit to bite,

And like a snake's love lithe and fierce."
Men have guessed worse.

What was the song I made of you
Here where the grass forgets our feet
As afternoon forgets the dew ?
Ah that such sweet things should be fleet,
Such fleet things sweet !

As afternoon forgets the dew,
As time in time forgets all men,
As our old place forgets us two,
Who might have turned to one thing then,
But not again.

O lips that mine have grown into
Like April's kissing May,
O fervent eyelids letting through
Those eyes the greenest of things blue,
The bluest of things gray,

If you were I and I were you,
How could I love you, say ?
How could the roseleaf love the rue,
The day love nightfall and her dew,
Though night may love the day ?

You loved it may be more than I ;
We know not ; love is hard to seize,
And all things are not good to try ;
And lifelong loves the worst of these
For us, Félise.

Ah, take the season and have done,
Love well the hour and let it go :
Two souls may sleep and wake up one,
Or dream they wake and find it so,
And then—you know.

Kiss me once hard as though a flame
Lay on my lips and made them fire ;
The same lips now, and not the same;
What breath shall fill and re-inspire
A dead desire ?

The old song sounds hollower in mine ear
Than thin keen sounds of dead men's speech—
A noise one hears and would not hear ;
Too strong to die, too weak to reach
From wave to beach.

We stand on either side the sea,
Stretch hands, blow kisses, laugh and lean
I toward you, you toward me ;
But what hears either save the keen
Gray sea between ?

A year divides us, love from love,
Though you love now, though I loved then.
The gulf is strait, but deep enough ;
Who shall recross, who among men
Shall cross again ?

Love was a jest last year, you said,
And what lives surely, surely dies.
Even so ; but now that love is dead,
Shall love rekindle from wet eyes,
From subtle sighs ?

For many loves are good to see,
Mutable loves, and loves perverse
But there is nothing, nor shall be,
So sweet, so wicked, but my verse
Can dream of worse.

For we that sing and you that love
Know that which man may, only we.
The rest live under us ; above,
Live the great gods in heaven, and see
What thing shall be.

So this thing is and must be so ;
For man dies, and love also dies.
Though yet love's ghost moves to and fro
The sea-green mirrors of your eyes,
And laughs, and lies.

Eyes colored like a water-flower,
And deeper than the green sea's glass ;

Eyes that remember one sweet hour—
In vain we swore it should not pass ;
In vain, alas !

Ah my Félise, if love or sin,
If shame or fear could hold it fast,
Should we not hold it ? Love wears thin,
And they laugh well who laugh the last.
Is it not past ?

The gods, the gods are stronger ; time
Falls down before them, all men's knees
Bow, all men's prayers and sorrows climb
Like incense towards them ; yea, for these
Are gods, Félise.

Immortal are they, clothed with powers,
Not to be comforted at all ;
Lords over all the fruitless hours ;
Too great to appease, too high to appal,
Too far to call.

For none shall move the most high gods,
Who are most sad, being cruel ; none
Shall break or take away the rods
Wherewith they scourge us, not as one
That smites a son.

By many a name of many a creed
We have called upon them, since the sands
Fell through time's hour-glass first, a seed
Of life ; and out of many lands
Have we stretched hands.

When have they heard us ? who hath known
Their faces, climbed unto their feet,
Felt them and found them ? Laugh or groan,
Doth heaven remurmur and repeat
Sad sounds or sweet ?

Do the stars answer ? in the night
Have ye found comfort ? or by day
Have ye seen gods ? What hope, what light,

Falls from the farthest starriest way
On you that pray ?

Are the skies wet because we weep,
Or fair because of any mirth ?
Cry out ; they are gods ; perchance they sleep ;
Cry ; thou shalt know what prayers are worth,
Thou dust and earth.

O earth, thou art fair ; O dust, thou art great ;
O laughing lips and lips that mourn,
Pray, till ye feel the exceeding weight
Of God's intolerable scorn,
Not to be borne.

Behold, there is no grief like this ;
The barren blossom of thy prayer,
Thou shalt find out how sweet it is.
O fools and blind, what seek ye there,
High up in the air ?

Ye must have gods, the friends of men,
Merciful gods, compassionate,
And these shall answer you again.
Will ye beat always at the gate,
Ye fools of fate ?

Ye fools and blind ; for this is sure,
That all ye shall not live, but die.
Lo, what thing have ye found endure ?
Or what thing have ye found on high
Past the blind sky ?

The ghosts of words and dusty dreams,
Old memories, faiths infirm and dead.
Ye fools ; for which among you deems
His prayer can alter green to red
Or stones to bread ?

Why should ye bear with hopes and fears
Till all these things be drawn in one,
The sound of iron-footed years,
And all the oppression that is done
Under the sun ?

Ye might end surely, surely pass
  Out of the multitude of things,
Under the dust, beneath the grass,
  Deep in dim death, where no thought stings,
  No record clings.

No memory more of love or hate,
  No trouble, nothing that aspires,
No sleepless labor thwarting fate,
  And thwarted; where no travail tires,
  Where no faith fires.

All passes, naught that has been is,
  Things good and evil have one end.
Can anything be otherwise
  Though all men swear all things would mend
  With God to friend?

Can ye beat off one wave with prayer,
  Can ye move mountains? bid the flower
Take flight and turn to a bird in the air?
  Can ye hold fast for shine or shower
  One wingless hour?

Ah sweet, and we too, can we bring
  One sigh back, bid one smile revive?
Can God restore one ruined thing,
  Or he who slays our souls alive
  Make dead things thrive?

Two gifts perforce he has given us yet,
  Though sad things stay and glad things fly;
Two gifts he has given us, to forget
  All glad and sad things that go by,
  And then to die.

We know not whether death be good,
  But life at least it will not be:
Men will stand saddening as we stood,
  Watch the same fields and skies as we
  And the same sea.

Let this be said between us here,
  One love grows green when one turns gray;

This year knows nothing of last year;
To-morrow has no more to say
To yesterday.

Live and let live, as I will do,
Love and let love, and so will I.
But, sweet, for me no more with you:
Not while I live, not though I die.
Good-night, good-by.

ON THE VERGE.

HERE begins the sea that ends not till the world's end.
Where we stand,
Could we know the next high sea-mark set beyond
these waves that gleam,
We should know what never man hath known, nor eye
of man hath scanned.
Nought beyond these coiling clouds that melt like
fume of shrines that steam
Breaks or stays the strength of waters till they pass our
bounds of dream.
Where the waste Land's End leans westward, all the
seas it watches roll
Find their border fixed beyond them, end a world-wide
shore's control:
These whereby we stand no shore beyond us limits:
these are free.
Gazing hence, we see the water that grows iron round
the Pole,
From the shore that hath no shore beyond it set in all
the sea.
Sail on sail along the sea-line fades and flashes; here
on land
Flash and fade the wheeling wings on wings of mews
that plunge and scream.
Hour on hour along the line of life and time's evasive
strand
Shines and darkens, wanes and waxes, slays and dies:
and scarce they seem
More than motes that thronged and trembled in the
brief noon's breath and beam.

Some with crying and wailing, some with notes like
sound of bells that toll,
Some with sighing and laughing, some with words
that blessed and made us whole,
Passed, and left us, and we know not what they were,
nor what were we.
Would we know, being mortal? Never breath of
answering whisper stole
From the shore that hath no shore beyond it set in all
the sea.

Shadows, would we question darkness? Ere our eyes
and brows be fanned
Round with airs of twilight, washed with dews from
sleep's eternal stream,
Would we know sleep's guarded secret? Ere the fire
consume the brand,
Would it know if yet its ashes may requicken? yet we
deem
Surely man may know, or ever night unyoke her starry
team,
What the dawn shall be, or if the dawn shall be not:
yea, the scroll
Would we read of sleep's dark scripture, pledge of
peace or doom of dole.
Ah, but here man's heart leaps, yearning toward the
gloom with venturous glee,
Though his pilot eye behold nor bay nor harbor, rock
nor shoal,
From the shore that hath no shore beyond it set in
all the sea.

Friend, who knows if death indeed have life or life
have death for goal?
Day nor night can tell us, nor may seas declare nor
skies unroll
What has been from everlasting, or if aught shall
alway be.
Silence answering only strikes response reverberate on
the soul
From the shore that hath no shore beyond it set in all
the sea.

THE SUNBOWS.

Spray of song that springs in April, light of love
that laughs through May,
Live and die and live for ever : nought of all things
far less fair
Keeps a surer life than these that seem to pass like
fire away.
In the souls they live which are but all the brighter
that they were ;
In the hearts that kindle, thinking what delight of old
was there.
Wind that shapes and lifts and shifts them bids
perpetual memory play
Over dreams and in and out of deeds and thoughts
which seem to wear
Light that leaps and runs and revels through the
springing flames of spray.

Dawn is wild upon the waters where we drink of
dawn to-day :
Wide, from wave to wave rekindling is rebound
through radiant air,
Flash the fires unwoven and woven again of wind
that works in play,
Working wonders more than heart may note or sight
may wellnigh dare,
Wefts of rarer light than colors rain from heaven,
though this be rare.
Arch on arch unbuilt in building, reared and ruined
ray by ray,
Breaks and brightens, laughs and lessens, even till
eyes may hardly bear
Light that leaps and runs and revels through the
springing flames of spray.

Year on year sheds light and music rolled and flashed
from bay to bay
Round the summer capes of time and winter head-
lands keen and bare

Whence the soul keeps watch, and bids her vassal
memory watch and pray,
If perchance the dawn may quicken, or perchance
the midnight spare.
Silence quells not music, darkness takes not sunlight
in her snare;
Shall not joys endure that perish? Yea, saith dawn,
though night say nay:
Life on life goes out, but very life enkindles every-
where
Light that leaps and runs and revels through the
springing flames of spray.

Friend, were life no more than this is, well would
yet the living fare.
All aflower and all afire and all flung heavenward,
who shall say
Such a flash of life were worthless? This is worth
a world of care—
Light that leaps and runs and revels through the
springing flames of spray.

IN THE WATER.

The sea is awake, and the sound of the song of the
joy of her waking is rolled
From afar to the star that recedes, from anear to the
wastes of the wild wide shore.
Her call is a trumpet compelling us homeward: if
dawn in her east be acold,
From the sea shall we crave not her grace to rekindle
the life that it kindled before,
Her breath to requicken, her bosom to rock us, her
kisses to bless as of yore?
For the wind, with his wings half open, at pause in
the sky, neither fettered nor free,
Leans waveward and flutters the ripple to laughter:
and fain would the twain of us be
Where lightly the waves yearn forward from under
the curve of the deep dawn's dome,

And, full of the morning and fired with the pride of
the glory thereof and the glee,
Strike out from the shore as the heart in us bids and
beseeches, athirst for the foam.

Life holds not an hour that is better to live in: the
past is a tale that is told,
The future a sun-flecked shadow, alive and asleep,
with a blessing in store.
As we give us again to the waters, the rapture of
limbs that the waters enfold
Is less than the rapture of spirit whereby, though
the burden it quits were sore,
Our souls and the bodies they wield at their will are
absorbed in the life they adore—
In the life that endures no burden, and bows not the
forehead, and bends not the knee—
In the life everlasting of earth and of heaven, in the
laws that atone and agree,
In the measureless music of things, in the fervor of
forces that rest or that roam,
That cross and return and reissue, as I after you and
as you after me
Strike out from the shore as the heart in us bids and
beseeches, athirst for the foam.

For, albeit he were less than the least of them, haply
the heart of a man may be bold
To rejoice in the word of the sea as a mother's that
saith to the son she bore,
Child, was not the life in thee mine, and my spirit
the breath in thy lips from of old?
Have I let not thy weakness exult in my strength,
and thy foolishness learn of my love?
Have I helped not or healed not thine anguish, or
made not the might of thy gladness more?
And surely his heart should answer, The light of the
love of my life is in thee.
She is fairer than earth, and the sun is not fairer,
the wind is not blither than she:
From my youth hath she shown me the joy of her
bays that I crossed, of her cliffs that I clomb,

Till now that the twain of us here, in desire of the dawn and in thrust of the sea,
Strike out from the shore as the heart in us bids and beseeches, athirst for the foam.

Friend, earth is a harbor of refuge for winter, a covert whereunder to flee
When day is the vassal of night, and the strength of the host of her mightier than he ;
But here is the presence adored of me, here my desire is at rest and at home.
There are cliffs to be climbed upon land, there are ways to be trodden and ridden : but we
Strike out from the shore as the heart in us bids and beseeches, athirst for the foam.

THE CAVES OF SARK.

(The island was visited by Victor Hugo during the first years of his exile.)

From the roots of the rocks underlying the gulfs that engird it around
Was the isle not enkindled with light of him landing, or thrilled not with sound ?
Yea, surely the sea like a harper laid hand on the shore as a lyre,
As the lyre in his own for a birthright of old that was given of his sire,
And the hand of the child was put forth on the chords yet alive and aflame
From the hand of the God that had wrought in heaven ; and the hand was the same.
And the tongue of the child spake, singing ; and never a note that he sang,
But the strings made answer unstricken, as though for the God they rang.
And the eyes of the child shone, lightening ; and touched as by life at his nod,
They shuddered with music, and quickened as though from the glance of the God.
So trembled the heart of the hills and the rocks to receive him, and yearned

With desirous delight of his presence and love that beholding him burned.
Yea, down through the mighty twin hollows where never the sunlight shall be,
Deep sunk under imminent earth, and subdued to the stress of the sea,
That feel when the dim week changes by change of their tides in the dark,
As the wave sinks under within them, reluctant, removed from its mark,
Even there in the terror of twilight in bloom with its blossoms ablush,
Did a sense of him touch not the gleam of their flowers with a fierier flush ?
Though the sun they behold not for ever, yet knew they not over them One
Whose soul was the soul of the morning, whose song was the song of the sun ?
But the secrets inviolate of sunlight in hollows untrodden of day,
Shall he dream what are these who beholds not ? or he that hath seen, shall he say ?
For the path is for passage of sea-mews ; and he that hath glided and leapt
Over sea-grass and sea-rock, alighting as one from a citadel crept
That his foemen beleaguer, descending by darkness and stealth, at the last
Peers under, and all is as hollow to hellward, agape and aghast.
But afloat and afar in the darkness a tremulous color subsides
From the crimson high crest of the purple-peaked roof to the soft-colored sides
That brighten as ever they widen till downward the level is won
Of the soundless and colorless water that knows not the sense of the sun :
From the crown of the culminant arch to the floor of the lakelet abloom,
One infinite blossom of blossoms innumerable aflush through the gloom.

All under the deeps of the darkness are glimmering; all over impends
An immeasurable infinite flower of the dark that dilates and descends,
That exults and expands in its breathless and blind efflorescence of heart
As it broadens and bows to the waveward, and breathes not, and hearkens apart.
As a beaker inverse at a feast on Olympus, exhausted of wine,
But inlaid as with rose from the lips of Dione that left it divine;
From the lips everliving of laughter and love everlasting, that leave
In the cleft of his heart who shall kiss them a snake to corrode it and cleave.
So glimmers the gloom into glory, the glory recoils into gloom,
That the eye of the sun could not kindle, the lip not of Love could relume.
So darkens reverted the cup that the kiss of her mouth set on fire.
So blackens a brand in his eyeshot asmoulder awhile from the pyre.
For the beam from beneath and without it refrangent again from the wave
Strikes up through the portal a ghostly reverse on the dome of the cave,
On the depth of the dome ever darkling and dim to the crown of its arc:
That the sun-colored tapestry, sunless forever, may soften the dark.
But within through the side-seen archway aglimmer again from the right
Is the seal of the sea's tide set on the mouth of the mystery of night.
And the seal on the seventh day breaks but a little, that man by its mean
May behold what the sun hath not looked on, the stars of the night hath not seen.

MARYMOUNT COLLEGE
TARRYTOWN, N. Y.

IN GUERNSEY.

TO THEODORE WATTS.

I.

THE heavenly bay, ringed round with cliffs and moors,
Storm-stained ravines, and crags that lawns inlay,
Soothes as with love the rocks whose guard secures
The heavenly bay.

O friend, shall time take ever this away,
This blessing given of beauty that endures,
This glory shown us, not to pass but stay?

Though sight be changed for memory, love ensures
What memory, changed by love to sight, would say—
The word that seals forever mine and yours
The heavenly bay.

II.

My mother sea, my fostress, what new strand,
What new delight of waters, may this be,
The fairest found since time's first breezes fanned
My mother sea?

Once more I give me body and soul to thee,
Who hast my soul forever: cliff and sand
Recede, and heart to heart once more are we.

My heart springs first and plunges, ere my hand
Strike out from shore: more close it brings to me,
More near and dear than seems my fatherland,
My mother sea.

III.

Across and along, as the bay's breadth opens, and o'er us
Wild autumn exults in the wind, swift rapture and strong

Impels us and broader the wide waves brighten before us
Across and along.

The whole world's heart is uplifted, and knows not wrong;
The whole world's life is a chant to the sea-tide's chorus;
Are we not as waves of the water, as notes of the song?

Like children unworn of the passions and toils that wore us,
We breast for a season the breadth of the seas that throng,
Rejoicing as they, to be borne as of old they bore us
Across and along.

IV.

On Dante's track by some funereal spell
Drawn down through desperate ways that lead not back
We seem to move, bound forth past flood and fell
On Dante's track.

The gray path ends: the gaunt rocks gape: the black
Deep hollow tortuous night, a soundless shell,
Glares darkness: are the fires of old grown slack?

Nay, then, what flames are these that leap and swell
As 'twere to show, where earth's foundations crack,
The secrets of the sepulchres of hell
On Dante's track?

V.

By mere men's hands the flame was lit, we know,
From heaps of dry waste whin and casual brands:
Yet, knowing, we scarce believe it kindled so
By mere men's hands.

Above, around, high-vaulted hell expands,
Steep, dense, a labyrinth walled and roofed with woe,
Whose mysteries even itself not understands.

The scorn in Farinata's eyes aglow
Seems visible in this flame : there Geryon stands :
No stage of earth's is here, set forth to show
By mere men's hands.

VI.

Night, in utmost noon forlorn and strong, with heart athirst and fasting,
Hungers here, barred up forever, whence as one whom dreams affright
Day recoils before the low-browed lintel threatening doom and casting
Night.

All the reefs and islands, all the lawns and highlands, clothed with light,
Laugh for love's sake in their sleep outside : but here the night speaks, blasting
Day with silent speech and scorn of all things known from depth to height.

Lower than dive the thoughts of spirit-stricken fear in souls forecasting
Hell, the deep void seems to yawn beyond fear's reach, and higher than sight
Rise the walls and roofs that compass it about with everlasting
Night.

VII.

The house accurst, with cursing sealed and signed,
Heeds not what storms about it burn and burst :
No fear more fearful than its own may find
The house accurst.

Barren as crime, anhungered and athirst,
Blank miles of moor sweep inland, sere and blind,
Where summer's best rebukes not winter's worst.

The low bleak tower with nought save waste behind
Stares down the abyss whereon chance reared and nurst,
This type and likeness of the accurst man's mind,
The house accurst.

VIII.

Beloved and blest, lit warm with love and fame,
The house that had the light of the earth for guest
Hears for his name's sake all men hail its name
Beloved and blest.

This eyrie was the homeless eagle's nest
When storm laid waste his eyrie: hence he came
Again, when storm smote sore his mother's breast.

Bow down men bade us, or be clothed with blame
And mocked for madness: worst, they sware, was best:
But grief shone here, while joy was one with shame,
Beloved and blest.

A DIALOGUE.

I.

Death, if thou wilt, fain would I plead with thee:
Canst thou not spare, of all our hopes have built,
One shelter where our spirits fain would be,
Death, if thou wilt?

No dome with suns and dews impearled and gilt,
Imperial: but some roof of wildwood tree,
Too mean for sceptre's heft or swordblade's hilt.

Some low sweet roof where love might live, set free
From change and fear and dreams of grief or guilt;
Canst thou not leave life even thus much to see,
Death, if thou wilt?

II.

Man, what art thou to speak and plead with me?
What knowest thou of my workings, where and how
What things I fashion? Nay, behold and see,
Man, what art thou?

Thy fruits of life, and blossoms of thy bough,
What are they but my seedlings? Earth and sea
Bear nought but when I breathe on it must bow.

Bow thou too down before me : though thou be
Great, all the pride shall fade from off thy brow,
When Time and strong Oblivion ask of thee,
Man, what art thou ?

III.

Death, if thou be or be not, as was said,
Immortal ; if thou make us nought, or we
Survive ; thy power is made but of our dread,
Death, if thou be.

Thy might is made out of our fear of thee :
Who fears thee not, hath plucked from off thine head
The crown of cloud that darkens earth and sea.

Earth, sea, and sky, as rain or vapor shed,
Shall vanish ; all the shows of them shall flee ;
Then shall we know full surely, quick or dead,
Death, if thou be.

HERTHA.

I AM that which began ;
Out of me the years roll ;
Out of me God and man ;
I am equal and whole ;
God changes, and man, and the form of them bodily ;
I am the soul.

Before ever land was,
Before ever the sea,
Or soft hair of the grass,
Or fair limbs of the tree,
Or the flesh-colored fruit of my branches, I was,
and thy soul was in me.

First life on my sources
First drifted and swam ;
Out of me are the forces
That save it or damn ;
Out of me man and woman, and wild-beast and bird :
before God was, I am.

Beside or above me
Nought is there to go ;
Love or unlove me,
Unknow me or know,
I am that which unloves me and loves ; I am stricken, and I am the blow.

I the mark that is missed
And the arrows that miss,
I the mouth that is kissed
And the breath in the kiss,
The search, and the sought, and the seeker, the soul and the body that is.

I am that thing which blesses
My spirit elate ;
That which caresses
With hands uncreate
My limbs unbegotten that measure the length of the measure of fate.

But what thing dost thou now,
Looking Godward, to cry
" I am I, thou art thou,
I am low, thou art high " ?
I am thou, whom thou seekest to find him ; find thou but thyself, thou art I.

I the grain and the furrow,
The plough-cloven clod
And the ploughshare drawn thorough,
The germ and the sod,
The deed and the doer, the seed and the sower, the dust which is God.

Hast thou known how I fashioned thee,
Child, underground ?
Fire that impassioned thee,
Iron that bound,
Dim changes of water, what thing of all these hast thou known of or found ?

Canst thou say in thine heart
Thou hast seen with thine eyes
With what cunning of art
Thou wast wrought in what wise,
By what force of what stuff thou wast shapen, and shown on my breast to the skies ?

Who hath given, who hath sold it thee,
Knowledge of me ?
Has the wilderness told it thee ?
Hast thou learnt of the sea ?
Hast thou communed in spirit with night ? have the winds taken counsel with thee ?

Have I set such a star
To show light on thy brow
That thou sawest from afar
What I show to thee now?
Have ye spoken as brethren together, the sun and the mountains and thou?

What is here, dost thou know it ?
What was, hast thou known ?
Prophet nor poet
Nor tripod nor throne
Nor spirit nor flesh can make answer, but only thy mother alone.

Mother, not maker,
Born, and not made ;
Though her children forsake her,
Allured or afraid,
Praying prayers to the God of their fashion, she stirs not for all that have prayed.

A creed is a rod,
And a crown is of night ;
But this thing is God,
To be man with thy might,
To grow straight in the strength of thy spirit, and live out thy life as the light.

I am in thee to save thee,
As my soul in thee saith ;
Give thou as I gave thee,
Thy life-blood and breath,
Green leaves of thy labor, white flowers of thy thought, and red fruit of thy death.

Be the ways of thy giving
As mine were to thee ;
The free life of thy living,
Be the gift of it free ;
Not as servant to lord, nor as master to slave, shalt thou give thee to me.

O children of banishment,
Souls overcast,
Were the lights ye see vanish meant
Alway to last,
Ye would know not the sun overshining the shadows and stars overpast.

I that saw where ye trod
The dim paths of the night
Set the shadow called God
In your skies to give light ;
But the morning of manhood is risen, and the shadowless soul is in sight.

The tree many-rooted
That swells to the sky
With frondage red-fruited,
The life-tree am I ;
In the buds of your lives is the sap of my leaves : ye shall live and not die.

But the Gods of your fashion
That take and that give,
In their pity and passion
That scourge and forgive,
They are worms that are bred in the bark that falls off ; they shall die and not live.

My own blood is what stanches
The wounds in my bark ;
Stars caught in my branches
Make day of the dark,
And are worshipped as suns till the sunrise shall tread out their fires as a spark.

Where dead ages hide under
The live roots of the tree,
In my darkness the thunder
Makes utterance of me ;
In the clash of my boughs with each other ye hear the waves sound of the sea.

That noise is of Time,
As his feathers are spread
And his feet set to climb
Through the boughs overhead,
And my foliage rings round him and rustles, and branches are bent with his tread.

The storm-winds of ages
Blow through me and cease,
The war-wind that rages,
The spring-wind of peace,
Ere the breath of them roughen my tresses, ere one of my blossoms increase.

All sounds of all changes,
All shadows and lights
On the world's mountain-ranges
And stream-riven heights,
Whose tongue is the wind's tongue and language of storm-clouds on earth-shaking nights ;

All forms of all faces,
All works of all hands
In unsearchable places
Of time-stricken lands,
All death and all life, and all reigns and all ruins, drop through me as sands.

Though sore be my burden
And more than ye know,
And my growth have no guerdon
But only to grow,
Yet I fail not of growing for lightnings above me or deathworms below.

These too have their part in me,
As I too in these;
Such fire is at heart in me,
Such sap is this tree's,
Which hath in it all sounds and all secrets of infinite lands and of seas.

In the spring-colored hours
When my mind was as May's
There brake forth of me flowers
By centuries of days,
Strong blossoms with perfume of manhood, shot out from my spirit as rays.

And the sound of them springing
And smell of their shoots
Were as warmth and sweet singing
And strength to my roots;
And the lives of my children made perfect with freedom of soul were my fruits.

I bid you but be;
I have need not of prayer;
I have need of you free
As your mouths of mine air;
That my heart may be greater within me, beholding the fruits of me fair.

More fair than strange fruit is
Of faiths ye espouse;
In me only the root is
That blooms in your boughs;
Behold now your God that ye made you, to feed him with faith of your vows.

In the darkening and whitening
Abysses adored,
With dayspring and lightning
For lamp and for sword,
God thunders in heaven, and his angels are red with the wrath of the Lord.

O my sons, O too dutiful
Toward Gods not of me,
Was not I enough beautiful?
Was it hard to be free?
For behold, I am with you, am in you and of you; look forth now and see.

Lo, winged with world's wonders,
With miracles shod,
With the fires of his thunders
For raiment and rod,
God trembles in heaven, and his angels are whits with the terror of God.

For his twilight is come on him,
His anguish is here;
And his spirits gaze dumb on him,
Grown gray from his fear;
And his hour taketh hold on him stricken, the last of his infinite year.

Thought made him and breaks him,
Truth slays and forgives;
But to you, as time takes him,
This new thing it gives,
Even love, the beloved Republic, that feeds upon freedom and lives.

For truth only is living,
Truth only is whole,
And the love of his giving
Man's polestar and pole;
Man, pulse of my centre, and fruit of my body, and seed of my soul.

One birth of my bosom;
One beam of mine eye;
One topmost blossom
That scales the sky;
Man, equal and one with me, man that is made of me, man that is I.

IN SAN LORENZO.

Is thine hour come to wake, O slumbering Night?
Hath not the Dawn a message in thine ear?
Though thou be stone and sleep, yet shalt thou hear
When the word falls from heaven—Let there be light.
Thou knowest we would not do thee the despite
To wake thee while the old sorrow and shame were near;
We spake not loud for thy sake, and for fear
Lest thou shouldst lose the rest that was thy right,
The blessing given thee that was thine alone,
The happiness to sleep and to be stone:
Nay, we kept silence of thee for thy sake
Albeit we knew thee alive, and left with thee
The great good gift to feel not nor to see;
But will not yet thine Angel bid thee wake?

A YEAR'S BURDEN.

1870.

αἴλινον αἴλινον εἰπὲ, τὸ δ' εὖ νικάτω.

Fire and wild light of hope and doubt and fear,
Wind of swift change, and clouds and hours that veer
As the storm shifts of the tempestuous year;
Cry wellaway, but well befall the right.

Hope sits yet hiding her war-wearied eyes,
Doubt sets her forehead earthward and denies,
But fear brought hand to hand with danger dies,
Dies and is burnt up in the fire of fight.

Hearts bruised with loss and eaten through with
shame
Turn at the time's touch to devouring flame;
Grief stands as one that knows not her own name,
Nor if the star she sees bring day or night.

No song breaks with it on the violent air,
But shrieks of shame, defeat, and brute despair;
Yet something at the star's heart far up there
Burns as a beacon in our shipwrecked sight.

O strange fierce light of presage, unknown star,
Whose tongue shall tell us what thy secrets are
What message trembles in thee from so far?
Cry wellaway, but well befall the right.

From shores laid waste across an iron sea
Where the waifs drift of hopes that were to be,
Across the red rolled foam we look for thee,
Across the fire we look up for the light.

From days laid waste across disastrous years,
From hopes cut down across a world of fears,
We gaze with eyes too passionate for tears,
Where faith abides though hope be put to flight.

Old hope is dead, the gray-haired hope grown blind
That talked with us of old things out of mind,
Dreams, deeds and men the world has left behind;
Yet, though hope die, faith lives in hope's despite.

Ay, with hearts fixed on death and hopeless hands
We stand about our banner while it stands
Above but one field of the ruined lands;
Cry wellaway, but well befall the right.

Though France were given for prey to bird and
beast,
Though Rome were rent in twain of king and priest,
The soul of man, the soul is safe at least
That gives death life and dead men hands to smite.

Are ye so strong, O kings, O strong men? Nay,
Waste all ye will and gather all ye may,
Yet one thing is there that ye shall not slay,
Even thought, that fire nor iron can affright.

The woundless and invisible thought that goes
Free throughout time as north or south wind blows,
Far throughout space as east or west sea flows,
And all dark things before it are made bright.

Thy thought, thy word, O soul republican,
O spirit of life, O God whose name is man:
What sea of sorrows but thy sight shall span?
Cry wellaway, but well befall the right.

With all its coils crushed, all its rings uncurled,
The one most poisonous worm that soiled the world
It wrenched from off the throat of man, and hurled
Into deep hell from empire's helpless height.

Time takes no more infection of it now;
Like a dead snake divided of the plough,
The rotten thing lies cut in twain; but thou,
Thy fires shall heal us of the serpent's bite.

Ay, with red cautery and a burning brand
Purge thou the leprous leaven of the land;
Take to thee fire, and iron in thine hand,
Till blood and tears have washed the soiled limbs white.

We have sinned against thee in dreams and wicked sleep;
Smite, we will shrink not; strike, we will not weep;
Let the heart feel thee; let thy wound go deep;
Cry wellaway, but well befall the right.

Wound us with love, pierce us with longing, make
Our souls thy sacrifices; turn and take
Our hearts for our sin-offerings lest they break,
And mould them with thine hands and give them might.

Then, when the cup of ills is drained indeed,
Will we come to thee with our wounds that bleed,
With famished mouths and hearts that thou shalt feed,
And see thee worshipped as the world's delight.

There shall be no more wars nor kingdoms won,
But in thy sight whose eyes are as the sun
All names shall be one name, all nations one,
All souls of men in man's one soul unite.

O sea whereon men labor, O great sea
That heaven seems one with, shall these things not be?
O earth, our earth, shall time not make us free?
Cry wellaway, but well befall the right.

TO AURELIO SAFFI.

I.

Year after year has fallen on sleep, till change
Hath seen the fourth part of a century fade,
Since you, a guest to whom the vales were strange
Where Isis whispers to the murmuring shade
Above her face by winds and willows made,
And I, elate at heart with reverence, met.
Change must give place to death ere I forget
The pride that change of years has quenched not yet.

II.

Pride from profoundest humbleness of heart
Born, self-uplift at once and self-subdued,
Glowed, seeing his face whose hand had borne such part
In so sublime and strange vicissitude
As then filled all faint hearts with hope renewed
To think upon, and triumph; though the time
Were dense and foul with darkness cast from crime
Across the heights that hope was fain to climb.

III.

Hope that had risen, a sun to match the sun
That fills and feeds all Italy with light,
Had set, and left the crowning work undone
That raised up Rome out of the shadow of night:
Yet so to have won the worst, to have fought the fight,
Seemed, as above the grave of hope cast down
Stood faith, and smiled against the whole world's frown,
A conquest lordlier than the conqueror's crown.

IV.

To have won the worst that chance could give, and worn
The wreath of adverse fortune as a sign
More bright than binds the brows of victory, borne
Higher than all trophies borne of tyrants shine—
What lordlier gift than this, what more divine,
Can earth or heaven make manifest, and bid
Men's hearts bow down and honor? Fate lies hid,
But not the work that true men dared and did.

V.

The years have given and taken away since then
More than was then foreseen of hope or fear.
Fallen are the towers of empire: all the men
Whose names made faint the heart of the earth to hear
Are broken as the trust they held so dear
Who put their trusts in princes: and the sun
Sees Italy, as he in heaven is, one;
But sees not him who spake, and this was done.

VI.

Not by the wise man's wit, the strong man's hand,
By swordsman's or by statesman's craft or might,
Sprang life again where life had left the land,
And light where hope nor memory nor saw light:
Not first nor most by grace of these was night

Cast out, and darkness driven before the day
Far as a battle-broken host's array
Flies, and no force that fain would stay it can stay.

VII.

One spirit alone, one soul more strong than fate,
  One heart whose heat was as the sundown's fire,
Fed first with flame as heaven's immaculate
  Faith, worn and wan and desperate of desire :
  And men that felt that sacred breath suspire
Felt by mere speech and presence fugitive
The holy spirit of man made perfect give
  Breath to the lips of death, that death might live.

VIII.

Not all as yet is yours, nor all is ours,
  That shall, if righteousness and reason be,
Fulfil the trust of time with happier hours
  And set their sons who fought for freedom free ;
  Even theirs whose faith sees, as they may not see,
Your land and ours wax lovelier in the light
Republican, whereby the thrones most bright
Look hoar and wan as eve or black as night,

IX.

Our words and works, our thoughts and songs turn thither,
  Toward one great end, as waves that press and roll.
Though waves be spent and ebb like hopes that wither,
  These shall subside not ere they find the goal.
  We know it, who yet with unforgetful soul
See shine and smile, where none may smite or strive,
Above us, higher than clouds and winds can drive,
The soul beloved beyond all souls alive.

A SUNSET.

NOVEMBER 25, 1885.

TO VICTOR HUGO.

I.

It was the dawn of winter : sword in sheath,
Change, veiled and mild, came down the gradual air
With cold slow smiles that hid the doom beneath.
Five days to die in yet were autumn's, ere
The last leaf withered from his flowerless wreath.
South, east, and north, our skies were all blown bare,
But westward over glimmering holt and heath
Cloud, wind, and light had made a heaven more fair
Than ever dream or truth
Showed earth in time's keen youth
When men with angels communed unaware.
Above the sun's head, now
Veiled even to the ardent brow,
Rose two sheer wings of sundering cloud, that were
As a bird's poised for vehement flight,
Full-fledged with plumes of tawny fire and hoar gray light.

II.

As midnight black, as twilight brown, they spread,
But feathered thick with flame that streaked and lined
Their living darkness, ominous else of dread,
From south to northmost verge of heaven inclined
Most like some giant angel's, whose bent head
Bowed earthward, as with message for mankind
Of doom or benediction to be shed
From passage of his presence. Far behind,
Even while they seemed to close,
Stoop, and take flight, arose

Above them, higher than heavenliest thought may find
In light or night supreme
Of vision or of dream,
Immeasurable of men's eyes or mounting mind,
Heaven, manifest in manifold
Light of pure pallid amber, cheered with fire of gold.

III.

And where the fine gold faded all the sky
Shone green as the outer sea when April glows,
Inlaid with flakes and feathers fledged to fly
Of cloud suspense in rapture and repose,
With large live petals, broad as love bids lie
Full open when the sun salutes the rose,
And small rent sprays wherewith the heavens most high
Were strewn as autumn strews the garden-close
With ruinous roseleaves whirled
About their wan chill world,
Through wind-worn bowers that now no music knows,
Spoil of the dim dusk year
Whose utter night is near,
And near the flower of dawn beyond it blows;
Till east and west were fire and light,
As though the dawn to come had flushed the coming night.

IV.

The highways paced of men that toil or play,
The byways known of none but lonely feet,
Were paven of purple woven of night and day
With hands that met as hands of friends might meet—
As though night's were not lifted up to slay
And day's had waxed not weaker. Peace more sweet
Than music, light more soft than shadow, lay
On downs and moorlands wan with day's defeat,
That watched afar above
Life's very rose of love

Let all its lustrous leaves fall, fade, and fleet,
And fill all heaven and earth
Full as with fires of birth
Whence time should feed his years with light and heat :
Nay, not life's, but a flower more strong
Than life or time or death, love's very rose of song.

V.

Song visible, whence all men's eyes were lit
With love and loving wonder : song that glowed
Through cloud and change on souls that knew not it
And hearts that wist not whence their comfort flowed,
Whence fear was lightened of her fever-fit,
Whence anguish of her life-compelling load.
Yea, no man's head whereon the fire alit,
Of all that passed along that sunset road
Westward, no brow so drear,
No eye so dull of cheer,
No face so mean whereon that light abode,
But as with alien pride
Strange godhead glorified
Each feature flushed from heaven with fire that showed
The likeness of its own life wrought
By strong transfiguration as of living thought.

VI.

Nor only clouds of the everlasting sky,
Nor only men that paced that sunward way
To the utter bourne of evening, passed not by
Unblest or unillumined : none might say,
Of all things visible in the wide world's eye,
That all too low for all that grace it lay :
The lowliest lakelets of the moorland nigh,
The narrowest pools where shallowest wavelets play,
Were filled from heaven above
With light like fire of love,
With flames and colours like a dawn in May,
As hearts that lowlier live
With light of thoughts that give

Light from the depth of souls more deep than they
Through song's or story's kindling scroll,
The splendor of the shadow that reveals the soul.

VII.

For, when such light is in the world, we share,
All of us, all the rays thereof that shine :
Its presence is alive in the unseen air,
Its fire within our veins as quickening wine ;
A spirit is shed on all men everywhere,
Known or not known of all men for divine.
Yea, as the sun makes heaven, that light makes fair
All souls of ours, all lesser souls than thine,
Priest, prophet, seer and sage,
Lord of a subject age
That bears thy seal upon it for a sign ;
Whose name shall be thy name,
Whose light thy light of fame,
The light of love that makes thy soul a shrine ;
Whose record through all years to be
Shall bear this witness written—that its womb bare thee.

VIII.

O mystery, whence to one man's hand was given
Power upon all things of the spirit, and might
Whereby the veil of all the years was riven
And naked stood the secret soul of night !
O marvel, hailed of eyes whence cloud is driven,
That shows at last wrong reconciled with right
By death divine of evil and sin forgiven !
O light of song, whose fire is perfect light !
No speech, no voice, no thought,
No love, avails us aught
For service of thanksgiving in his sight
Who hath given us all for ever
Such gifts that man gave never
So many and great since first Time's wings took flight.
Man may not praise a spirit above
Man's : life and death shall praise him : we can only love.

IX.

Life, everlasting while the worlds endure,
  Death, self-abased before a power more high,
Shall bear one witness, and their word stand sure,
  That not till time be dead shall this man die.
Love, like a bird, comes loyal to his lure;
  Fame flies before him, wingless else to fly.
A child's heart toward his kind is not more pure,
  An eagle's toward the sun no lordlier eye.
    Awe sweet as love and proud
    As fame, though hushed and bowed,
  Yearns toward him silent as his face goes by:
    All crowns before his crown
    Triumphantly bow down,
For pride that one more great than all draws nigh:
    All souls applaud, all hearts acclaim,
One heart benign, one soul supreme, one conquering
    ame.

CHILDREN.

Of such is the kingdom of heaven.
  No glory that ever was shed
From the crowning star of the seven
  That crown the north world's head,

No word that ever was spoken
  Of human or godlike tongue,
Gave ever such godlike token
  Since human harps were strung.

No sign that ever was given
  To faithful or faithless eyes
Showed ever beyond clouds riven
  So clear a Paradise.

Earth's creeds may be seventy times seven
  And blood have defiled each creed:
If of such be the kingdom of heaven,
  It must be heaven indeed.

A CHILD'S LAUGHTER.

All the bells of heaven may ring,
All the birds of heaven may sing,
All the wells on earth may spring,
All the winds on earth may bring
  All sweet sounds together;
Sweeter far than all things heard,
Hand of harper, tone of bird,
Sound of woods at sundawn stirred,
Welling water's winsome word,
  Wind in warm wan weather,

One thing yet there is, that none
Hearing ere its chime be done
Knows not well the sweetest one
Heard of man beneath the sun,
  Hoped in heaven hereafter;
Soft and strong and loud and light,
Very sound of very light
Heard from morning's rosiest height,
When the soul of all delight
  Fills a child's clear laughter.

Golden bells of welcome rolled
Never forth such notes, nor told
Hours so blithe in tones so bold,
As the radiant mouth of gold
  Here that rings forth heaven.
If the golden-crested wren
Were a nightingale—why, then,
Something seen and heard of men
Might be half as sweet as when
  Laughs a child of seven.

A CHILD'S SLEEP.

As light on a lake's face moving
  Between a cloud and a cloud
Till night reclaim it, reproving
  The heart that exults too loud,

The heart that watching rejoices
When soft it swims into sight
Applauded of all the voices
And stars of the windy night,

So brief and unsure, but sweeter
Than ever a moondawn smiled,
Moves, measured of no tune's metre,
The song in the soul of a child;

The song that the sweet soul singing
Half listens, and hardly hears,
Though sweeter than joy-bells ringing
And brighter than joy's own tears;

The song that remembrance of pleasure
Begins, and forgetfulness ends
With a soft swift change in the measure
That rings in remembrance of friends.

As the moon on the lake's face flashes,
So haply may gleam at whiles
A dream through the dear deep lashes
Whereunder a child's eye smiles,

And the least of us all that love him
May take for a moment part
With angels around and above him,
And I find place in his heart.

A SONG OF WELCOME.

If the wind and the sunlight of April and August had mingled the past and hereafter
In a single adorable season whose life were a rapture of love and of laughter,
And the blithest of singers were back with a song; if again from his tomb as from prison,
If again from the night or the twilight of ages Aristophanes had arisen,
With the gold-feathered wings of a bird that were also a god upon earth at his shoulders,

And the gold-flowing laugh of the manhood of old at
his lips, for a joy to beholders,
He alone unrebuked of presumption were able to set
to some adequate measure
The delight of our eyes in the dawn that restores
them the sun of their sense and the pleasure.
For the days of the darkness of spirit are over for all
of us here, and the season
When desire was a longing, and absence a thorn, and
rejoicing a word without reason.
For the roof overhead of the pines is astir with de-
light as of jubilant voices,
And the floor underfoot of the bracken and heather
alive as a heart that rejoices.
For the house that was childless awhile, and the light
of it darkened, the pulse of it dwindled,
Rings radiant again with a child's bright feet, with
the light of his face is rekindled.
And the ways of the meadows that knew him, the
sweep of the down that the sky's belt closes,
Grow gladder at heart than the soft wind made them
whose feet were but fragrant with roses,
Though the fall of the year be upon us, who trusted
in June and by June were defrauded,
And the summer that brought us not back the desire
of our eyes be gone hence unapplauded.
For July came joyless among us, and August went
out from us arid and sterile,
And the hope of our hearts, as it seemed, was no more
than a flower that the seasons imperil,
And the joy of our hearts, as it seemed, than a thought
which regret had not heart to remember,
Till four dark months overpast were atoned for, and
summer began in September.
Hark, April again as a bird in the house with a child's
voice hither and thither:
See, May in the garden again with a child's face cheer-
ing the woods ere they wither.
June laughs in the light of his eyes, and July on the
sunbright cheeks of him slumbers,
And August glows in a smile more sweet than the
cadence of gold-mouthed numbers.

In the morning the sight of him brightens the sun,
and the noon with delight in him flushes,
And the silence of nightfall is music about him as soft
as the sleep that it hushes.
We awake with a sense of a sunrise that is not a gift
of the sundawn's giving,
And a voice that salutes us is sweeter than all sounds
else in the world of the living,
And a presence that warms us is brighter than all in
the world of our visions beholden,
Though the dreams of our sleep were as those that the
light of a world without grief makes golden.
For the best that the best of us ever devised as a like-
ness of heaven and its glory,
What was it of old, or what is it and will be forever,
in song or in story,
Or in shape or in color of carven or painted resem-
blance, adored of all ages,
But a vision recorded of children alive in the pictures
of old or the pages?
Where children are not, heaven is not, and heaven if
they come not again shall be never:
But the face and the voice of a child are assurance of
heaven and its promise forever.

SONNETS.

TO WILLIAM BELL SCOTT.

The larks are loud above our leagues of whin,
Now the sun's perfume fills their glorious gold
With odor like the color: all the wold
Is only light and song and wind wherein
These twain are blent in one with shining din.
And now your gift, a giver's kingly-souled,
Dear old fast friend whose honors grow not old,
Bids memory's note as loud and sweet begin.
Though all but we from life be now gone forth
Of that bright household in our joyous north
Where I, scarce clear of boyhood just at end,
First met your hand; yet under life's clear dome

Now seventy strenuous years have crowned my friend,
Shines no less bright his full-sheaved harvest home.

APRIL 20, 1882.

ON THE DEATHS OF THOMAS CARLYLE AND GEORGE ELIOT.

Two souls diverse out of our human sight
Pass, followed one with love and each with wonder:
The stormy sophist with his mouth of thunder,
Clothed with loud words and mantled in the might
Of darkness and magnificence of night;
And one whose eye could smite the night in sunder,
Searching if light or no light were thereunder,
And found in love of loving-kindness light.
Duty divine and Thought with eyes of fire
Still following Righteousness with deep desire
Shone sole and stern before her and above
Sure stars and sole to steer by; but more sweet
Shone lower the loveliest lamp for earthly feet,—
The light of little children, and their love.

AFTER LOOKING INTO CARLYLE'S REMINISCENCES.

I.

THREE men lived yet when this dead man was young,
Whose names and words endure forever: one
Whose eyes grew dim with straining toward the sun,
And his wings weakened, and his angel's tongue
Lost half the sweetest song was ever sung,
But like the strain half uttered, earth hears none,
Nor shall man hear till all men's songs are done;
One whose clear spirit like an eagle hung
Between the mountains hallowed by his love
And the sky stainless as his soul above;
And one, the sweetest heart that ever spake
The brightest words wherein sweet wisdom smiled.
These deathless names by this dead snake defiled
Bid memory spit upon him for their sake.

II.

Sweet heart, forgive me for thine own sweet sake,
Whose kind blithe soul such seas of sorrow swam,
And for my love's sake, powerless as I am
For love to praise thee, or like thee to make
Music of mirth where hearts less pure would break,
Less pure than thine, our life-unspotted Lamb.
Things hatefullest thou hadst not heart to damn,
Nor wouldst have set thine heel on this dead snake.
Let worms consume its memory with its tongue,
The fang that stabbed fair Truth, the lip that stung
Men's memories uncorroded with its breath.
Forgive me, that with bitter words like his
I mix the gentlest English name that is,
The tenderest held of all that know not death.

A LAST LOOK.

Sick of self-love, Malvolio, like an owl
That hoots the sun re-risen where starlight sank,
With German garters crossed athwart thy frank
Stout Scottish legs, men watched thee snarl and scowl,
And boys responsive with reverberate howl
Shrilled, hearing how to thee the springtime stank,
And as thine own soul all the world smelt rank,
And as thine own thoughts Liberty seemed foul.
Now, for all ill thoughts nursed and ill words given
Not all condemned, not utterly forgiven,
Son of the storm and darkness, pass in peace.
Peace upon earth thou knewest not; now, being dead,
Rest, with nor curse nor blessing on thine head,
Where high-strung hate and strenuous envy cease.

DICKENS.

Chief in thy generation born of men
Whom English praise acclaimed as English-born,
With eyes that matched the world wide eyes of morn
For gleam of tears or laughter, tenderest then
When thoughts of children warmed their light, or when

Reverence of age with love and labor worn,
Or godlike pity fired with godlike scorn,
Shot through them flame that winged thy swift live pen:
Where stars and suns that we behold not burn,
Higher even than here, though highest was here thy place,
Love sees thy spirit laugh and speak and shine
With Shakespeare, and the soft bright soul of Sterne,
And Fielding's kindliest might, and Goldsmith's grace;
Scarce one more loved or worthier love than thine.

ON LAMB'S SPECIMENS OF DRAMATIC POETS.

I.

If all the flowers of all the fields on earth
By wonder-working summer were made one,
Its fragrance were not sweeter in the sun,
Its treasure-house of leaves were not more worth
Than those wherefrom thy light of musing mirth
Shone, till each leaf whereon thy pen would run
Breathed life, and all its breath was benison.
Beloved beyond all names of English birth,
More dear than mightier memories! gentlest name
That ever clothed itself with flower sweet fame,
Or linked itself with loftiest names of old
By right and might of loving; I, that am
Less than the least of those within thy fold,
Give only thanks for them to thee, Charles Lamb.

II.

So many a year had borne its own bright bees
And slain them since thy honey-bees were hived,
John Day, in cells of flower-sweet verse contrived
So well with craft of moulding melodies,
Thy soul perchance in amaranth fields at ease
Thought not to hear the sound on earth revived
Of summer music from the spring derived

When thy song sucked the flower of flowering trees.
But thine was not the chance of every day :
Time, after many a darkling hour, grew sunny,
And light between the clouds ere sunset swam,
Laughing, and kissed their darkness all away,
When, touched and tasted and approved, thy honey
Took subtler sweetness from the lips of Lamb.

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE.

Crowned, girdled, garbed, and shod with light and fire,
Son first-born of the morning, sovereign star !
Soul nearest ours of all, that wert most far,
Most far off in the absym of time, thy lyre
Hung highest above the dawn-enkindled quire
Where all ye sang together, all that are,
And all the starry songs behind thy car
Rang sequence, all our souls acclaim thee sire.

"If all the pens that ever poets held
Had fed the feeling of their masters' thoughts,"
And as with rush of hurtling chariots
The flight of all their spirits were impelled
Toward one great end, thy glory—Nay, not then,
Not yet mightst thou be praised enough of men.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

Not if men's tongue and angels' all in one
Spake, might the word be said that might speak Thee.
Streams, winds, woods, flowers, fields, mountains, yea, the sea,
What power is in them all to praise the sun ?
His praise is this,—he can be praised of none.
Man, woman, child, praise God for him ; but he
Exults not to be worshipped, but to be.
He is ; and, being, beholds his work well done.
All joy, all glory, all sorrow, all strength, all mirth,
Are his : without him, day were night on earth.

Time knows not his from time's own period.
All lutes, all harps, all viols, all flutes, all lyres,
Fall dumb before him ere one string suspires.
All stars are angels ; but the sun is God.

BEN JONSON.

Broad-based, broad-fronted, bounteous, multiform,
With many a valley impleached with ivy and vine,
Wherein the springs of all the streams run wine,
And many a crag full-faced against the storm,
The mountain where thy Muse's feet made warm
Those lawns that revelled with her dance divine,
Shines yet with fire as it was wont to shine
From tossing torches round the dance a-swarm.

Nor less, high-stationed on the gray grave heights,
High-thoughted seers with heaven's heart-kindling lights
Hold converse : and the herd of meaner things
Knows or by fiery scourge or fiery shaft
When wrath on thy broad brows has risen, and laughed,
Darkening thy soul with shadow of thunderous wings.

BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER.

An hour ere sudden sunset fired the west,
Arose two stars upon the pale deep east.
The hall of heaven was clear for night's high feast,
Yet was not yet day's fiery heart at rest.
Love leapt up from his mother's burning breast
To see those warm twin lights, as day decreased,
Wax wider, till, when all the sun had ceased,
As suns they shone from evening's kindled crest.
Across them and between, a quickening fire,
Flamed Venus, laughing with appeased desire.
Their dawn, scarce lovelier for the gleam of tears,
Filled half the hollow shell 'twixt heaven and earth

With sound like moonlight, mingling moan and mirth,
Which rings and glitters down the darkling years.

PHILIP MASSINGER.

Clouds here and there arisen an hour past noon
Checkered our English heaven with lengthening bars
And shadow and sound of wheel-winged thunder-cars
Assembling strength to put forth tempest soon,
When the clear still warm concord of thy tune
Rose under skies unscared by reddening Mars,
Yet, like a sound of silver speech of stars,
With full mild flame as of the mellow moon.
Grave and great-hearted Massinger, thy face
High melancholy lights with loftier grace
Than gilds the brows of revel : sad and wise,
The spirit of thought that moved thy deeper song,
Sorrow serene in soft calm scorn of wrong,
Speaks patience yet from thy majestic eyes.

JOHN FORD.

Hew hard the marble from the mountain's heart
Where hardest night holds fast in iron gloom
Gems brighter than an April dawn in bloom,
That his Memnonian likeness thence may start
Revealed, whose hand with high funereal art
Carved night, and chiselled shadow : be the tomb
That speaks him famous graven with signs of doom,
Intrenched inevitably in lines athwart,
As on some thunder-blasted Titan's brow
His record of rebellion. Not the day
Shall strike forth music from so stern a chord,
Touching this marble : darkness, none knows how,
And stars impenetrable of midnight, may.
So looms the likeness of thy soul, John Ford.

JOHN WEBSTER.

Thunder: the flesh quails, and the soul bows down.
Night: east, west, south, and northward, very night.
Star upon struggling star strives into sight,
Star after shuddering star the deep storms drown.
The very throne of night, her very crown,
A man lays hand on, and usurps her right.
Song from the highest of heaven's imperious height
Shoots, as a fire to smite some towering town.
Rage, anguish, harrowing fear, heart-crazing crime,
Make monstrous all the murderous face of Time
Shown in the spheral orbit of a glass
Revolving. Earth cries out from all her graves.
Frail, on frail rafts, across wide-wallowing waves,
Shapes here and there of child and mother pass.

THOMAS DECKER.

Out of the depths of darkling life, where sin
Laughs piteously that sorrow should not know
Her own ill name, nor woe be counted woe;
Where hate and craft and lust make drearier din
Than sounds through dreams that grief holds revel in,—
What charm of joy-bells ringing, streams that flow,
Wind that blow healing in each note they blow,
Is this that the outer darkness hears begin?

O sweetest heart of all thy time save one,
Star seen for love's sake nearest to the sun,
Hung lamplike o'er a dense and doleful city,
Not Shakespeare's very spirit, howe'er more great,
Than thine toward man was more compassionate,
Nor gave Christ praise from lips more sweet with pity.

THOMAS MIDDLETON.

A WILD moon riding high from cloud to cloud,
  That sees and sees not, glimmering far beneath,
  Hell's children revel along the shuddering heath
With dirge-like mirth and raiment like a shroud;
A worse fair face than witchcraft's, passion-proud,
  With brows blood-flecked behind their bridal wreath,
  And lips that bade the assassin's sword find sheath
Deep in the heart whereto love's heart was vowed;
A game of close contentious crafts and creeds
  Played till white England bring black Spain to shame;
A son's bright sword and brighter soul, whose deeds
  High conscience lights for mother's love and fame;
Pure gypsy flowers, and poisonous courtly weeds:
  Such tokens and such trophies crown thy name.

THOMAS HEYWOOD.

TOM, if they loved thee best who called thee Tom,
  What else may all men call thee, seeing thus bright
  Even yet the laughing and the weeping light
That still thy kind old eyes are kindled from?
Small care was thine to assail and overcome
  Time and his child Oblivion: yet of right
  Thy name has part with names of lordlier might
For English love and homely sense of home,
Whose fragrance keeps thy small sweet bay-leaf young,
  And gives it place aloft among thy peers,
  Whence many a wreath once higher strong Time has hurled;
And this thy praise is sweet on Shakespeare's tongue,—
  "O good old man! how well in thee appears
  The constant service of the antique world!"

JOHN MARSTON.

THE bitterness of death and bitterer scorn
  Breathes from the broad-leafed aloe-plant whence thou
  Wast fain to gather for thy bended brow
A chaplet by no gentler forehead worn.
Grief deep as hell, wrath hardly to be borne,
  Ploughed up thy soul till round the furrowing plough
  The strange black soil foamed, as a black-beaked prow
Bids night-black waves foam where its track has torn.
Too faint the phrase for thee that only saith
Scorn bitterer than the bitterness of death
  Pervades the sullen splendor of thy soul,
Where hate and pain make war on force and fraud,
And all the strengths of tyrants; whence unflawed
  It keeps this noble heart of hatred whole.

GEORGE CHAPMAN.

HIGH priest of Homer, not elect in vain,
  Deep trumpets blow before thee, shawms behind
  Mix music with the rolling wheels that wind
Slow through the laboring triumph of thy train:
Fierce history, molten in thy forging brain,
  Takes form and fire and fashion from thy mind,
  Tormented and transmuted out of kind:
But howsoe'er thou shift thy strenuous strain,
Like Tailor [1] smooth, like Fisher [2] swollen, and now
  Grim Yarrington [3] scarce bloodier marked than thou,
  Then bluff as Mayne's [4] or broad-mouthed Barry's [5] glee,

[1] Author of The Hog hath lost his Pearl.
[2] Author of Fuimus Troes, or the True Trojans.
[3] Author of Two Tragedies in One.
[4] Author of The City Match.
[5] Author of Ram-Alley, or Merry Tricks.

Proud still with hoar predominance of brow
And beard like foam swept off the broad blown sea,
Where'er thou go, men's reverence goes with thee.

JOHN DAY.

DAY was a full-blown flower in heaven, alive
With murmuring joy of bees and birds a-swarm,
When in the skies of song yet flushed and warm
With music where all passion seems to strive
For utterance, all things bright and fierce to drive
Struggling along the splendor of the storm,
Day for an hour put off his fiery form,
And golden murmurs from a golden hive
Across the strong bright summer wind were heard,
And laughter soft as smiles from girls at play,
And loud from lips of boys brow-bound with May.
Our mightiest age let fall its gentlest word,
When Song, in semblance of a sweet small bird,
Lit fluttering on the light swift hand of Day.

JAMES SHIRLEY.

THE dusk of day's decline was hard on dark
When evening trembled round thy glowworm lamp
That shone across her shades and dewy damp,
A small clear beacon whose benignant spark
Was gracious yet for loiterers' eyes to mark,
Though changed the watchword of our English camp
Since the outposts rang round Marlowe's lion ramp,
When thy steed's pace went ambling round Hyde Park.

And in the thickening twilight under thee
Walks Davenant, pensive in the paths where he,
The blithest throat that ever carolled love
In music made of morning's merriest heart,

Glad Suckling, stumbled from his seat above,
And reeled on slippery roads of alien art.

THE TRIBE OF BENJAMIN.

Sons born of many a loyal Muse to Ben,
All true-begotten, warm with wine or ale,
Bright from the broad light of his presence, hail!
Prince Randolph, nighest his throne of all his men,
Being highest in spirit and heart who hailed him then
King, nor might other spread so blithe a sail:
Cartwright, a soul pent in with narrower pale,
Praised of thy sire for manful might of pen:
Marmion, whose verse keeps alway keen and fine
The perfume of their Apollonian wine,
Who shared with that stout sire of all and thee
The exuberant chalice of his echoing shrine:
Is not your praise writ broad in gold which he
Inscribed, that all who praise his name should see?

ANONYMOUS PLAYS: "ARDEN OF FEVERSHAM."

Mother whose womb brought forth our man of men,
Mother of Shakespeare, whom all time acclaims
Queen therefore, sovereign queen of English dames,
Throned higher than sat thy sonless empress then,
Was it thy son's young passion-guided pen
Which drew, reflected from encircling flames,
A figure marked by the earlier of thy names
Wife, and from all her wedded kinswomen
Marked by the sign of murderess? Pale and great,
Great in her grief and sin, but in her death
And anguish of her penitential breath
Greater than all her sin or sin-born fate,
She stands, the holocaust of dark desire,
Clothed round with song forever as with fire.

ANONYMOUS PLAYS.

Ye too, dim watchfires of some darkling hour,
  Whose fame forlorn time saves not nor proclaims
  Forever, but forgetfulness defames,
And darkness and the shadow of death devour,
Lift up ye too your light, put forth your power,
  Let the far twilight feel your soft small flames,
  And smile, albeit night name not even their names,
Ghost by ghost passing, flower blown down on flower;
That sweet-tongued shadow, like a star's that passed
Singing, and light was from its darkness cast
  To paint the face of Painting fair with praise:[1]
And that wherein forefigured smiles the pure
Fraternal face of Wordsworth's Elidure
  Between two child-faced masks of merrier days.[2]

ANONYMOUS PLAYS.

More yet and more, and yet we mark not all:
  The Warning fain to bid fair women heed
  Its hard brief note of deadly doom and deed;[3]
The verse that strewed too thick with flowers the hall
Whence Nero watched his fiery festival;[4]
  That iron page wherein men's eyes who read
  See, bruised and marred between two babes that bleed,
A mad red-handed husband's martyr fall;[5]
The scene which crossed and streaked with mirth the strife
Of Henry with his sons and witchlike wife;[6]

[1] Doctor Dodypol.
[2] Nobody and Somebody.
[3] A Warning for fair Women
[4] The Tragedy of Nero.
[5] A Yorkshire Tragedy
[6] Look about you.

And that sweet pageant of the kindly fiend,
Who, seeing three friends in spirit and heart made one,
Crowned with good hap the true-love wiles he screened
In the pleached lanes of pleasant Edmonton.[1]

THE MANY.

I.

Greene, garlanded with February's few flowers,
Ere March came in with Marlowe's rapturous rage;
Peele, from whose hand the sweet white locks of age
Took the mild chaplet woven of honored hours;
Nash, laughing hard; Lodge, flushed from lyric bowers;
And Lilly, a goldfinch in a twisted cage,
Fed by some gay great lady's pettish page
Till short sweet songs gush clear like short spring showers;
Kid, whose grim sport still gambolled over graves;
And Chettle, in whose fresh funereal verse
Weeps Marian yet on Robin's wild-wood hearse;
Cooke, whose light boat of song one soft breath saves,
Sighed from a maiden's amorous mouth averse:
Live likewise ye: Time takes not you for slaves.

THE MANY.

II.

Haughton, whose mirth gave woman all her will;
Field, bright and loud with laughing flower and bird,
And keen alternate notes of laud and gird;
Barnes, darkening once with Borgia's deeds the quill
Which turned the passion of Parthenophil;

[1] The Merry Devil of Edmonton.

Blithe burly Porter, broad and bold of word ;
Wilkins, a voice with strenuous pity stirred :
Turk Mason ; Brewer, whose tongue drops honey still ;
Rough Rowley, handling song with Esau's hand ;
Light Nabbes ; lean Sharpham, rank and raw by turns,
But fragrant with a forethought once of Burns ;
Soft Davenport, sad-robed, but blithe and bland ;
Brome, gypsy-led across the woodland ferns :
Praise be with all, and place among our band.

EPILOGUE.

Our mother, which wast twice, as history saith,
Found first among the nations : once, when she
Who bore thine ensign saw the God in thee
Smite Spain, and bring forth Shakespeare ; once, when death
Shrank, and Rome's bloodhounds cowered, at Milton's breath :
More than thy place, then first among the free ;
More than that sovereign lordship of the sea
Bequeathed to Cromwell from Elizabeth ;
More than thy fiery guiding-star, which Drake
Hailed, and the deep saw lit again for Blake ;
More than all deeds wrought of thy strong right hand,—
This praise keeps most thy fame's memorial strong,
That thou wast head of all these streams of song,
And time bows down to thee as Shakespeare's land.

THE END.

ROSSETTI'S POETICAL WORKS

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PREFACE.

GABRIEL CHARLES DANTE ROSSETTI, who, at an early stage of his professional career, modified his name into Dante Gabriel Rossetti, was born on 12th May 1828, at No. 38 Charlotte Street, Portland Place, London. In blood he was three-fourths Italian, and only one-fourth English; being on the father's side wholly Italian (Abruzzese), and on the mother's side half Italian (Tuscan) and half English. His father was Gabriele Rossetti, born in 1783 at Vasto, in the Abruzzi, Adriatic coast, in the then kingdom of Naples. Gabriele Rossetti (died 1854) was a man of letters, a custodian of ancient bronzes in the Museo Borbonico of Naples, and a poet; he distinguished himself by patriotic lays which fostered the popular movement resulting in the grant of a constitution by Ferdinand I. of Naples in 1820. The King, after the fashion of Bourbons and tyrants, revoked the constitution in 1821, and persecuted the abettors of it, and Rossetti had to escape for his freedom, or perhaps even for his life. He settled in London towards 1824, married, and became Professor of Italian in King's College, London, publishing also various works of bold speculation in the way of Dantesque commentary and exposition. His wife was Frances Mary Lavinia Polidori (died 1886), daughter of Gaetano Polidori (died 1853), a teacher of Italian and literary man who had in early youth been secretary to the poet Alfieri, and who pub-

lished various books, including a complete translation of Milton's poems. Frances Polidori was English on the side of her mother, whose maiden name was Pierce. The family of Rossetti and his wife consisted of four children, born in four successive years—Maria Francesca (died 1876), Dante Gabriel, William Michael, and Christina Georgina, the two last-named being now the only survivors. Few more affectionate husbands and fathers have lived, and no better wife and mother, than Gabriele and Frances Rossetti. The means of the family were always strictly moderate, and became scanty towards 1843, when the father's health began to fail. In or about that year Dante Gabriel left King's College School, where he had learned Latin, French, and a beginning of Greek; and he entered upon the study of the art of painting, to which he had from earliest childhood exhibited a very marked bent. After a while he was admitted to the school of the Royal Academy, but never proceeded beyond its antique section. In 1848 Rossetti co-operated with two of his fellow-students in painting, John Everett Millais and William Holman Hunt, and with the sculptor Thomas Woolner, in forming the so-called Præraphaelite Brotherhood. There were three other members of the Brotherhood—James Collinson (succeeded after two or three years by Walter Howell Deverell), Frederick George Stephens, and the present writer. Ford Madox Brown, the historical painter, was known to Rossetti much about the same time when the Præraphaelite scheme was started, and bore an important part both in directing his studies and in upholding the movement, but he did not think fit to join the Brotherhood in any direct or complete sense. Through Deverell, Rossetti came to know Elizabeth Eleanor Siddal, daughter of a Sheffield cutler, herself a milliner's assistant, gifted

with some artistic and some poetic faculty; in the Spring of 1860, after a long engagement, they married. Their wedded life was of short duration, as she died in February 1862, having meanwhile given birth to a still-born child. For several years up to this date Rossetti, designing and painting many works, in oil-color or as yet more frequently in water-color, had resided at No. 14 Chatham Place, Blackfriars Bridge, a line of street now demolished. In the autumn of 1862 he removed to No. 16 Cheyne Walk, Chelsea. At first certain apartments in the house were occupied by Mr. George Meredith the novelist, Mr. Swinburne the poet, and myself. This arrangement did not last long, although I myself remained a partial inmate of the house up to 1873. My brother continued domiciled in Cheyne Walk until his death; but from about 1869 he was frequently away at Kelmscot manorhouse, in Oxfordshire, not far from Lechlade, occupied jointly by himself, and by the poet Mr. William Morris with his family. From the autumn of 1872 till the summer of 1874 he was wholly settled at Kelmscot, scarcely visiting London at all. He then returned to London, and Kelmscot passed out of his ken.

In the early months of 1850 the members of the Præraphaelite Brotherhood, with the co-operation of some friends, brought out a short-lived magazine named *The Germ* (afterwards *Art and Poetry*); here appeared the first verses and the first prose published by Rossetti, including *The Blessed Damozel* and *Hand and Soul*. In 1856 he contributed a little to *The Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, printing there *The Burden of Nineveh*. In 1861, during his married life, he published his volume of translations *The Early Italian Poets*, now entitled *Dante and his Circle*. By the time therefore of the death of his wife he had a certain restricted yet

far from inconsiderable reputation as a poet, along with his recognized position as a painter—a non-exhibiting painter, it may here be observed, for, after the first two or three years of his professional course, he adhered with practical uniformity to the plan of abstaining from exhibition altogether. He had contemplated bringing out in or about 1862 a volume of original poems; but in the grief and dismay which overwhelmed him in losing his wife, he determined to sacrifice to her memory this long-cherished project, and he buried in her coffin the manuscripts which would have furnished forth the volume. With the lapse of years he came to see that, as a final settlement of the matter, this was neither obligatory nor desirable; so in 1869 the manuscripts were disinterred, and in 1870 his volume named *Poems* was issued. For some considerable while it was hailed with general and lofty praise, chequered by only moderate stricture or demur; but late in 1871 Mr. Robert Buchanan published under a pseudonym, in the *Contemporary Review*, a very hostile article named *The Fleshly School of Poetry*, attacking the poems on literary and more especially on moral grounds. The article, in an enlarged form, was afterwards reissued as a pamphlet. The assault produced on Rossetti an effect altogether disproportionate to its intrinsic importance; indeed, it developed in his character an excess of sensitiveness and of distempered brooding which his nearest relatives and friends had never before surmised,—for hitherto he had on the whole had an ample sufficiency of high spirits, combined with a certain underlying gloominess or abrupt moodiness of nature and outlook. Unfortunately there was in him already only too much of morbid material on which this venom of detraction was to work. For some years the state of his eyesight had given very

grave cause for apprehension, he himself fancying from time to time that the evil might end in absolute blindness, a fate with which our father had been formidably threatened in his closing years. From this or other causes insomnia had ensued, coped with by far too free a use of chloral, which may have begun towards the end of 1869. In the summer of 1872 he had a dangerous crisis of illness; and from that time forward, but more especially from the middle of 1874, he became secluded in his habits of life, and often depressed, fanciful, and gloomy. Not indeed that there were no intervals of serenity, even of brightness; for in fact he was often genial and pleasant, and a most agreeable companion, with as much *bonhomie* as acuteness for wiling an evening away. He continued also to prosecute his pictorial work with ardor and diligence, and at times he added to his product as a poet. The second of his original volumes, *Ballads and Sonnets*, was published in the autumn of 1881. About the same time he sought change of air and scene in the Vale of St. John, near Keswick, Cumberland; but he returned to town more shattered in health and in mental tone than he had ever been before. In December a shock of a quasi-paralytic character struck him down. He rallied sufficiently to remove to Birchington-on-Sea, near Margate. The hand of death was then upon him, and was to be relaxed no more. The last stage of his maladies was uræmia. Tended by his mother and his sister Christina, with the constant companionship at Birchington of Mr. Hall Caine, and in the presence likewise of Mr. Theodore Watts, Mr. Frederick Shields, and myself, he died on Easter Sunday, April 9th 1882. His sister-in-law, the daughter of Madox Brown, arrived immediately after his latest breath had been drawn. He lies buried in the churchyard of Birchington.

Few brothers were more constantly together, or shared one another's feelings and thoughts more intimately, in childhood, boyhood, and well on into mature manhood, than Dante Gabriel and myself. I have no idea of limning his character here at any length, but will define a few of its leading traits. He was always and essentially of a dominant turn, in intellect and in temperament a leader. He was impetuous and vehement, and necessarily therefore impatient; easily angered, easily appeased, although the embittered feelings of his later years obscured this amiable quality to some extent; constant and helpful as a friend where he perceived constancy to be reciprocated; free-handed and heedless of expenditure, whether for himself or for others; in family affection warm and equable, and (except in relation to our mother, for whom he had a fondling love) not demonstrative. Never on stilts in matters of the intellect or of aspiration, but steeped in the sense of beauty, and loving, if not always practising, the good; keenly alive also (though many people seem to discredit this now) to the laughable as well as the grave or solemn side of things; superstitious in grain, and anti-scientific to the marrow. Throughout his youth and early manhood I considered him to be markedly free from vanity, though certainly well equipped in pride; the distinction between these two tendencies was less definite in his closing years. Extremely natural and therefore totally unaffected in tone and manner, with the naturalism characteristic of Italian blood; good-natured and hearty, without being complaisant or accommodating; reserved at times, yet not haughty; desultory enough in youth, diligent and persistent in maturity; self-centred always, and brushing aside whatever traversed his purpose or his bent. He was very generally and very greatly liked by persons of ex-

tremely diverse character ; indeed, I think it can be no exaggeration to say that no one ever disliked him. Of course I do not here confound the question of liking a man's personality with that of approving his conduct out-and-out.

Of his manner I can perhaps convey but a vague impression. I have said that it was natural ; it was likewise eminently easy, and even of the free-and-easy kind. There was a certain British bluffness, streaking the finely poised Italian suppleness and facility. As he was thoroughly unconventional, caring not at all to fall in with the humors or prepossessions of any particular class of society, or to conciliate or approximate the socially distinguished, there was little in him of any veneer or varnish of elegance ; none the less he was courteous and well-bred, meeting all sorts of persons upon equal terms—*i.e.*, upon his own terms ; and I am satisfied that those who are most exacting in such matters found in Rossetti nothing to derogate from the standard of their requirements. In habit of body he was indolent and lounging, disinclined to any prescribed or trying exertion of any sort, and very difficult to stir out of his ordinary groove, yet not wanting in active promptitude whenever it suited his liking. He often seemed totally unoccupied, especially of an evening ; no doubt the brain was busy enough.

The appearance of my brother was to my eye rather Italian than English, though I have more than once heard it said that there was nothing observable to bespeak foreign blood. He was of rather low middle stature, say five feet seven and a half, like our father ; and, as the years advanced, he resembled our father not a little in a characteristic way, yet with highly obvious divergences. Meagre in youth, he was at times decidedly fat in mature age. The complexion,

clear and warm, was also dark, but not dusky or sombre. The hair was dark and somewhat silky; the brow grandly spacious and solid; the full-sized eyes bluish-gray; the nose shapely, decided, and rather projecting, with an aquiline tendency and large nostrils, and perhaps no detail in the face was more noticeable at a first glance than the very strong indentation at the spring of the nose below the forehead; the mouth moderately well-shaped, but with a rather thick and unmoulded under-lip; the chin unremarkable; the line of the jaw, after youth was passed, full, rounded, and sweeping; the ears well-formed and rather small than large. His hips were wide, his hands and feet small; the hands very much those of the artist or author type, white, delicate, plump, and soft as a woman's. His gait was resolute and rapid, his general aspect compact and determined, the prevailing expression of the face that of a fiery and dictatorial mind concentrated into repose. Some people regarded Rossetti as eminently handsome; few, I think, would have refused him the epithet of well-looking. It rather surprises me to find from Mr. Caine's book of *Recollections* that that gentleman, when he first saw Rossetti in 1880, considered him to look full ten years older than he really was,—namely, to look as if sixty-two years old. To my own eye nothing of the sort was apparent. He wore moustaches from early youth, shaving his cheeks; from 1870 or thereabouts he grew whiskers and beard, moderately full and auburn-tinted, as well as moustaches. His voice was deep and harmonious; in the reading of poetry, remarkably rich, with rolling swell and musical cadence.

My brother was very little of a traveller; he disliked the interruption of his ordinary habits of life, and the flurry or discomfort, involved in locomotion. In boy-

hood he knew Boulogne: he was in Paris three or four times, and twice visited some principal cities of Belgium. This was the whole extent of his foreign travelling. He crossed the Scottish border more than once, and knew various parts of England pretty well—Hastings, Bath, Oxford, Matlock, Stratford-on-Avon, Newcastle-on-Tyne, Bognor, Herne Bay; Kelmscot, Keswick, and Birchington-on-Sea, have been already mentioned. From 1878 or thereabouts he became, until he went to the neighborhood of Keswick, an absolute home-keeping recluse, never even straying outside the large garden of his own house, except to visit from time to time our mother in the central part of London.

From an early period of life he had a large circle of friends, and could always have commanded any amount of intercourse with any number of ardent or kindly well-wishers, had he but felt elasticity or cheerfulness of mind enough for the purpose. I should do injustice to my own feelings if I were not to mention here some of his leading friends. First and foremost I name Mr. Madox Brown, his chief intimate throughout life, on the unexhausted resources of whose affection and converse he drew incessantly for long years; they were at last separated by the removal of Mr. Brown to Manchester, for the purpose of painting the Town Hall frescoes. The Præraphaelites—Millais, Hunt, Woolner, Stephens, Collinson, Deverell—were on terms of unbounded familiarity with him in youth; owing to death or other causes, he lost sight eventually of all of them except Mr. Stephens. Mr. William Bell Scott was, like Mr. Brown, a close friend from a very early period until the last; Scott being both poet and painter, there was a strict bond of affinity between him and Rossetti. Mr. Ruskin was extremely intimate with my brother

from 1854 till about 1865, and was of material help to his professional career. As he rose towards celebrity, Rossetti knew Burne Jones, and through him Morris and Swinburne, all staunch and fervently sympathetic friends. Mr. Shields was a rather later acquaintance, who soon became an intimate, equally respected and cherished. Then Mr. Hueffer the musical critic (now a close family connection, editor of the Tauchnitz edition of Rossetti's works), and Dr. Hake the poet. Through the latter my brother came to know Mr. Theodore Watts, whose intellectual companionship and incessant assiduity of friendship did more than anything else towards assuaging the discomforts and depression of his closing years. In the latest period the most intimate among new acquaintances were Mr. William Sharp and Mr. Hall Caine, both of them known to Rossettian readers as his biographers. Nor should I omit to speak of the extremely friendly relation in which my brother stood to some of the principal purchasers of his pictures—Mr. Leathart, Mr. Rae, Mr. Leyland, Mr. Graham, Mr. Valpy, Mr. Turner, and his early associate Mr. Boyce. Other names crowd upon me—James Hanny, John Tupper, Patmore, Thomas and John Seddon, Mrs. Bodichon, Browning, John Marshall, Tebbs, Mrs. Gilchrist, Miss Boyd, Sandys, Whistler, Joseph Knight, Fairfax Murray, Mr. and Mrs. Stillman, Treffry Dunn, Lord and Lady Mount-Temple, Oliver Madox Brown, the Marstons, father and son—but I forbear.

Before proceeding to some brief account of the sequence, etc., of my brother's writings, it may be worth while to speak of the poets who were particularly influential in nurturing his mind and educing its own poetic endowment. The first poet with whom he became partially familiar was Shakespeare. Then fol-

lowed the usual boyish fancies for Walter Scott and Byron. The Bible was deeply impressive to him, perhaps above all Job, Ecclesiastes, and the Apocalypse. Byron gave place to Shelley when my brother was about sixteen years of age; and Mrs. Browning and the old English or Scottish ballads rapidly ensued. It may have been towards this date, say 1845, that he first seriously applied himself to Dante, and drank deep of that inexhaustible well-head of poesy and thought; for the Florentine, though familiar to him as a name, and in some sense as a pervading penetrative influence, from earliest childhood, was not really assimilated until boyhood was practically past. Bailey's *Festus* was enormously relished about the same time—read again and yet again; also *Faust*, Victor Hugo, De Musset (and along with them a swarm of French novelists), and Keats, whom my brother for the most part, though not without some compunctious visitings now and then, truly preferred to Shelley. The only classical poet whom he took to in any degree worth speaking of was Homer, the Odyssey considerably more than the Iliad. Tennyson reigned along with Keats, and Edgar Poe and Coleridge along with Tennyson. In the long run he perhaps enjoyed and revered Coleridge beyond any other modern poet whatsoever; but Coleridge was not so distinctly or separately in the ascendant, at any particular period of youth, as several of the others. Blake likewise had his peculiar meed of homage, and Charles Wells, the influence of whose prose style, in the *Stories after Nature*, I trace to some extent in Rossetti's *Hand and Soul*. Lastly came Browning, and for a time, like the serpent-rod of Moses, swallowed up all the rest. This was still at an early stage of life; for I think the year 1847 cannot certainly have been passed before my brother was deep in Browning. The readings or frag-

mentary recitations of *Bells and Pomegranates, Paracelsus,* and above all *Sordello,* are something to remember from a now distant past. My brother lighted upon *Pauline* (published anonymously) in the British Museum, copied it out, recognized that it must be Browning's, and wrote to the great poet at a venture to say so, receiving a cordial response, followed by genial and friendly intercourse for several years. One prose-work of great influence upon my brother's mind, and upon his product as a painter, must not be left unspecified—Malory's *Mort d'Arthur,* which engrossed him towards 1856. The only poet whom I feel it needful to add to the above is Chatterton. In the last two or three years of his life my brother entertained an abnormal—I think an exaggerated—admiration of Chatterton. It appears to me that (to use a very hackneyed phrase) he "evolved this from his inner consciousness" at that late period; certainly in youth and early manhood he had no such feeling. He then read the poems of Chatterton with cursory glance and unexcited spirit, recognizing them as very singular performances for their date in English literature, and for the author's boyish years, but beyond that laying no marked stress upon them.

The reader may perhaps be surprised to find some names unmentioned in this list: I have stated the facts as I remember and know them. Chaucer, Spenser, the Elizabethan dramatists (other than Shakespeare), Milton, Dryden, Pope, Wordsworth, are unnamed. It should not be supposed that he read them not at all, or cared not for any of them; but, if we except Chaucer in a rather loose way and (at a late period of life) Marlowe in some of his non-dramatic poems, they were comparatively neglected. Thomas Hood he valued highly; also very highly Burns in ma-

ture years, but he was not a constant reader of the Scottish lyrist. Of Italian poets he earnestly loved none saved Dante: Cavalcanti in his degree, and also Poliziano and Michelangelo—not Petrarca, Boccaccio, Ariosto, Tasso, or Leopardi, though in boyhood he delighted well enough in Ariosto. Of French poets, none beyond Hugo and De Musset; except Villon, and partially Dumas, whose novels ranked among his favorite reading. In German poetry he read nothing currently in the original, although (as our pages bear witness) he had in earliest youth so far mastered the language as to make some translations. Calderon, in Fitzgerald's version, he admired deeply; but this was only at a late date. He had no liking for the specialties of Scandinavian, nor indeed of Teutonic, thought and work, and little or no curiosity about Oriental—such as Indian, Persian, or Arabic—poetry. Any writing about devils, spectres, or the supernatural generally, whether in poetry or in prose, had always a fascination for him; at one time, say 1844, his supreme delight was the blood-curdling romance of Maturin, *Melmoth the Wanderer*.

I now pass to a specification of my brother's own writings. Of his merely childish or boyish performances I need have said nothing, were it not that they have been mentioned in other books regarding Rossetti. First then there was *The Slave*, a "drama" which he composed and wrote out in or about the sixth year of his age. It is of course simple nonsense. "Slave" and "traitor" were two words which he found *passim* in Shakespeare; so he gave to his principal or only characters the names of Slave and Traitor. If what they do is meaningless, what they say (when they deviate from prose) is probably unmetrical; but it is so long since I read *The Slave* that I speak about this with

uncertainty. Towards his thirteenth year he began a romantic prose-tale named *Roderick and Rosalba.* I hardly think that he composed anything else prior to the ballad narrative *Sir Hugh the Heron,* founded on a tale by Allan Cunningham. Our grandfather printed it in 1843, which is probably the year of its composition. It is correctly enough versified, but has no merit, and little that could even be called promise. Soon afterwards a prose-tale named *Sorrentino,* in which the devil played a conspicuous part, was begun, and carried to some length ; it was of course boyish, but it must, I think, have shown some considerable degree of cleverness. In 1844 or 1845 there was a translation of Bürger's *Lenore,* spirited and I suppose fairly efficient ; and in November 1845 was begun a translation of the *Nibelungenlied,* almost deserving (if my memory serves me) to be considered good. Several hundred lines of it must certainly have been written. My brother was by this time a practised and competent versifier, at any rate, and his mere prentice-work may count as finished.

Other original verse, not in any large quantity, succeeded, along with the version of *Der Arme Heinrich,* and the beginning of his translations from the early Italians. These must, I think, have been in full career in the first half of 1847, if not in 1846. They show a keen sensitiveness to whatsoever is poetic in the originals, and a sinuous strength and ease in providing English equivalents, with the command of a rich and romantic vocabulary. In his nineteenth year, or before 12th May 1847, he wrote *The Blessed Damozel.* *

* My brother said so, in a letter published by Mr. Caine. He must presumably have been correct ; otherwise I should have thought that his twentieth year, or even his twenty-first, would be nearer the mark.

As that is universally recognized as one of his typical or consummate productions, marking the high level of his faculty whether inventive or executive, I may here close this record of preliminaries; the poems, with such slight elucidations as my notes supply, being left to speak for themselves. I will only add that for some while, more especially in the later part of 1848 and in 1849, my brother practised his pen to no small extent in writing sonnets to *bouts-rimés*. He and I would sit together in our bare little room at the top of No. 50 Charlotte Street, I giving him the rhymes for a sonnet, and he me the rhymes for another; and we would write off our emulous exercises with considerable speed, he constantly the more rapid of the two. From five to eight minutes may have been the average time for one of his sonnets; not unfrequently more, and sometimes hardly so much. In fact, the pen scribbled away at its fastest. Many of his *bouts-rimés* sonnets still exist in my possession, a little touched up after the first draft. Two or three seemed to me nearly good enough to appear in the present collection, but on the whole I decided against them all. Some have a *faux air* of intensity of meaning, as well as of expression; but their real core of significance is necessarily small, the only wonder being how he could spin so deftly with so weak a thread. I may be allowed to mention that most of my own sonnets (and not sonnets alone) published in *The Germ* were *bouts-rimés* experiments such as above described. In poetic tone they are of course inferior to my brother's work of like fashioning; in point of sequence or self-congruity of meaning, the comparison might be less to my disadvantage.

Dante Rossetti was a very fastidious writer, and, I might add, a very fastidious painter. He did not in-

deed "cudgel his brains" for the idea of a poem or the structure or diction of a stanza. He wrote out of a large fund or reserve of thought and consideration, which would culminate in a clear impulse or (as we say) an inspiration. In the execution he was always heedful and reflective from the first, and he spared no after-pains in clarifying and perfecting. He abhorred anything straggling, slipshod, profuse, or uncondensed. He often recurred to his old poems, and was reluctant to leave them merely as they were. A natural concomitant of this state of mind was a great repugnance to the notion of publishing, or of having published after his death, whatever he regarded as juvenile, petty, or inadequate. As editor of his Poems, I have had to regulate myself by these feelings of his, whether my own entirely correspond with them or not. The amount of unpublished work which he left behind him was by no means large; out of the moderate bulk I have been careful to select only such examples as I suppose that he would himself have approved for the purpose, or would, at any rate, not gravely have objected to. A list of the new items is given at page xli, and a few details regarding them will be found among my notes. Some projects or arguments of poems which he never executed had, I think, been practically abandoned by him in all the later years of his life; but there was one subject which he had seriously at heart, and for which he had collected some materials, and he would perhaps have put it into shape had he lived a year or two longer—a ballad on the subject of Joan Darc, to match *The White Ship* and *The King's Tragedy*.

I have not unfrequently heard my brother say that he considered himself more essentially a poet than a painter. To vary the form of expression, he thought

that he had mastered the means of embodying poetical conceptions in the verbal and rhythmical vehicle more thoroughly than in form and design, perhaps more thoroughly than in color.

WILLIAM M. ROSSETTI.

LONDON, *June* 1886.

POEMS.

I.—PRINCIPAL POEMS.

DANTE AT VERONA.

Yea, thou shalt learn how salt his food who fares
Upon another's bread,—how steep his path
Who treadeth up and down another's stairs.
(*Div. Com. Parad.* xvii.)

Behold, even I, even I am Beatrice.
(*Div. Com. Purg.* xxx.)

Of Florence and of Beatrice
Servant and singer from of old,
O'er Dante's heart in youth had toll'd
The knell that gave his Lady peace;
And now in manhood flew the dart
Wherewith his City pierced his heart.

Yet if his Lady's home above
Was Heaven, on earth she filled his soul;
And if his City held control
To cast the body forth to rove,
The soul could soar from earth's vain throng,
And Heaven and Hell fulfil the song.

Follow his feet's appointed way;—
But little light we find that clears
The darkness of the exiled years.
Follow his spirit's journey:—nay,
What fires are blent, what winds are blown
On paths his feet may tread alone?

Yet of the twofold life he led
In chainless thought and fettered will
Some glimpses reach us,—somewhat still
Of the steep stairs and bitter bread,—
Of the soul's quest whose stern avow
For years had made him haggard now.

Alas! the Sacred Song whereto
Both heaven and earth had set their hand
Not only at Fame's gate did stand
Knocking to claim the passage through,
But toiled to ope that heavier door
Which Florence shut for evermore.

Shall not his birth's baptismal Town
One last high presage yet fulfil,
And at that font in Florence still
His forehead take the laurel-crown?
O God! or shall dead souls deny
The undying soul its prophecy?

Aye, 'tis their hour. Not yet forgot
The bitter words he spoke that day
When for some great charge far away
Her rulers his acceptance sought.
"And if I go, who stays?"—so rose
His scorn:—"and if I stay, who goes?"

"Lo! thou art gone now, and we stay"
(The curled lips mutter): "and no star
Is from thy mortal path so far
As streets where childhood knew the way.
To Heaven and Hell thy feet may win,
But thine own house they come not in.

Therefore, the loftier rose the song
To touch the secret things of God,
The deeper pierced the hate that trod
On base men's track who wrought the wrong;
Till the soul's effluence came to be
Its own exceeding agony.

Arriving only to depart,
From court to court, from land to land,
Like flame within the naked hand
His body bore his burning heart
That still on Florence strove to bring
God's fire for burnt offering.

Even such was Dante's mood, when now,
Mocked for long years with Fortune's sport
He dwelt at yet another court,
There where Verona's knee did bow
And her voice hailed with all acclaim
Can Grande della Scala's name.

As that lord's kingly guest awhile
His life we follow; through the days
Which walked in exile's barren ways,—
The nights which still beneath one smile
Heard through all spheres one song increase,—
"Even I, even I am Beatrice."

At Can La Scala's court, no doubt,
Due reverence did his steps attend;
The ushers on his path would bend
At ingoing as at going out;
The penmen waited on his call
At council-board, the grooms in hall.

And pages hushed their laughter down,
  And gay squires stilled the merry stir,
  When he passed up the dais-chamber
With set brows lordlier than a frown;
  And tire-maids hidden among these
  Drew close their loosened bodices.

Perhaps the priests, (exact to span
  All God's circumference,) if at whiles
  They found him wandering in their aisles,
Grudged ghostly greeting to the man
  By whom, though not of ghostly guild,
  With Heaven and Hell men's hearts were fill'd.

And the court-poets (he, forsooth,
  A whole world's poet strayed to court!)
  Had for his scorn their hate's retort.
He'd meet them flushed with easy youth,
  Hot on their errands. Like noon-flies
  They vexed him in the ears and eyes.

But at this court, peace still must wrench
  Her chaplet from the teeth of war:
  By day they held high watch afar,
At night they cried across the trench;
  And still, in Dante's path, the fierce
  Gaunt soldiers wrangled o'er their spears.

But vain seemed all the strength to him,
  As golden convoys sunk at sea
  Whose wealth might root out penury:
Because it was not, limb with limb,
  Knit like his heart-strings round the wall
  Of Florence, that ill pride might fall.

Yet in the tiltyard, when the dust
Cleared from the sundered press of knights
Ere yet again it swoops and smites,
He almost deemed his longing must
Find force to wield that multitude
And hurl that strength the way he would.

How should he move them,—fame and gain
On all hands calling them at strife?
He still might find but his one life
To give, by Florence counted vain:
One heart the false hearts made her doubt,
One voice she heard once and cast out.

Oh! if his Florence could but come,
A lily-sceptred damsel fair,
As her own Giotto painted her
On many shields and gates at home,—
A lady crowned, at a soft pace
Riding the lists round to the dais:

Till where Can Grande rules the lists,
As young as Truth, as calm as Force,
She draws her rein now, while her horse
Bows at the turn of the white wrists;
And when each knight within his stall
Gives ear, she speaks and tells them all:

All the foul tale,—truth sworn untrue
And falsehood's triumph. All the tale?
Great God! and must she not prevail
To fire them ere they heard it through,—
And hand achieve ere heart could rest
That high adventure of her quest?

How would his Florence lead them forth,
Her bridle ringing as she went;
And at the last within her tent,
'Neath golden lilies worship-worth,
How queenly would she bend the while
And thank the victors with her smile!

Also her lips should turn his way
And murmur: "O thou tried and true,
With whom I wept the long years through!
What shall it profit if I say,
Thee I remember? Nay, through thee
All ages shall remember me."

Peace, Dante, peace! The task is long,
The time wears short to compass it.
Within thine heart such hopes may flit
And find a voice in deathless song:
But lo! as children of man's earth,
Those hopes are dead before their birth.

Fame tells us that Verona's court
Was a fair place. The feet might still
Wander forever at their will
In many ways of sweet resort;
And still in many a heart around
The Poet's name due honor found.

Watch we his steps. He comes upon
The women at their palm-playing.
The conduits round the gardens sing
And meet in scoops of milk-white stone,
Where wearied damsels rest and hold
Their hands in the wet spurt of gold.

One of whom, knowing well that he,
By some found stern, was mild with them,
Would run and pluck his garment's hem,
Saying, "Messer Dante, pardon me,"—
Praying that they might hear the song
Which first of all he made, when young

"Donne che avete" * . . . Thereunto
Thus would he murmur, having first
Drawn near the fountain, while she nurs'd
His hand against her side: a few
Sweet words, and scarcely those, half said:
Then turned, and changed, and bowed his head.

For then the voice said in his heart,
"Even I, even I am Beatrice;"
And his whole life would yearn to cease:
Till having reached his room, apart
Beyond vast lengths of palace-floor,
He drew the arras round his door.

At such times, Dante, thou hast set
Thy forehead to the painted pane
Full oft, I know; and if the rain
Smote it outside, her fingers met
Thy brow; and if the sun fell there,
Her breath was on thy face and hair.

Then, weeping, I think certainly
Thou hast beheld, past sight of eyne,—
Within another room of thine

* Donne che avete intellettod'amore:—the first canzone of the Vita Nuova.

Where now thy body may not be
But where in thought thou still remain'st,—
A window often wept against :

The window thou, a youth, hast sought,
Flushed in the limpid eventime,
Ending with daylight the day's rhyme
Of her ; where oftenwhiles her thought
Held thee—the lamp untrimmed to write—
In joy through the blue lapse of night.

At Can La Scala's court, no doubt,
Guests seldom wept. It was brave sport,
No doubt, at Can La Scala's court,
Within the palace and without ;
Where music, set to madrigals,
Loitered all day through groves and halls.

Because Can Grande of his life
Had not had six-and-twenty years
As yet. And when the chroniclers
Tell you of that Vicenza strife
And of strifes elsewhere,—you must not
Conceive for church-sooth he had got.

Just nothing in his wits but war :
Though doubtless 'twas the young man's joy
(Grown with his growth from a mere boy,)
To mark his "Viva Cane!" scare
The foe's shut front, till it would reel
All blind with shaken points of steel.

But there were places—held too sweet
For eyes that had not the due veil
Of lashes and clear lids—as well

In favor as his saddle-seat:
Breath of low speech he scorned not there
Nor light cool fingers in his hair.

Yet if the child whom the sire's plan
Made free of a deep treasure-chest
Scoffed it with ill-conditioned jest,—
We may be sure too that the man
Was not mere thews, nor all content
With lewdness swathed in sentiment.

So you may read and marvel not
That such a man as Dante—one
Who, while Can Grande's deeds were done,
Had drawn his robe round him and thought—
Now at the same guest-table far'd
Where keen Uguccio wiped his beard.*

Through leaves and trellis-work the sun
Left the wine cool within the glass,—
They feasting where no sun could pass:
And when the women, all as one,
Rose up with brightened cheeks to go,
It was a comely thing, we know.

But Dante recked not of the wine;
Whether the women stayed or went,
His visage held one stern intent:
And when the music had its sign
To breathe upon them for more ease,
Sometimes he turned and bade it cease.

And as he spared not to rebuke
The mirth, so oft in council he
To bitter truth bore testimony:

* Uguccione della Faggiuola, Dante's former protector, was now his fellow-guest at Verona.

And when the crafty balance shook
Well poised to make the wrong prevail,
Then Dante's hand would turn the scale.

And if some envoy from afar
Sailed to Verona's sovereign port
For aid or peace, and all the court
Fawned on its lord, "the Mars of war,
Sole arbiter of life and death,"—
Be sure that Dante saved his breath.

And Can La Scala marked askance
These things, accepting them for shame
And scorn, till Dante's guestship came
To be a peevish sufferance:
His host sought ways to make his days
Hateful; and such have many ways.

There was a Jester, a foul lout
Whom the court loved for graceless arts;
Sworn scholiast of the bestial parts
Of speech; a ribald mouth to shout
In Folly's horny tympanum
Such things as make the wise man dumb.

Much loved, him Dante loathed. And so,
One day when Dante felt perplex'd
If any day that could come next
Were worth the waiting for or no,
And mute he sat amid their din,—
Can Grande called the Jester in.

Rank words, with such, are wit's best wealth.
Lords mouthed approval; ladies kept
Twittering with clustered heads, except

Some few that took their trains by stealth
And went. Can Grande shook his hair
And smote his thighs and laughed i' the air.

Then, facing on his guest, he cried,—
"Say, Messer Dante, how it is
I get out of a clown like this
More than your wisdom can provide."
And Dante: "'Tis man's ancient whim
That still his like seems good to him."

Also a tale is told, how once,
At clearing tables after meat,
Piled for a jest at Dante's feet
Were found the dinner's well-picked bones;
So laid, to please the banquet's lord,
By one who crouched beneath the board

Then smiled Can Grande to the rest:—
"Our Dante's tuneful mouth indeed
Lacks not the gift on flesh to feed!"
"Fair host of mine," replied the guest,
"So many bones you'd not descry
If so it chanced the *dog* were I."*

But wherefore should we turn the grout
In a drained cup, or be at strife
From the worn garment of a life
To rip the twisted ravel out?
Good needs expounding; but of ill
Each hath enough to guess his fill.

They named him Justicer-at-law:
Each month to bear the tale in mind
Of hues a wench might wear unfin'd

* "*Messere, voi non vedreste tant 'ossa se cane io fossi.*" The point of the reproach is difficult to render, depending as it does on the literal meaning of the name *Cane*.

And of the load an ox might draw ;
To cavil in the weight of bread
And to see purse-thieves gibbeted.

And when his spirit wove the spell
(From under even to over-noon
In converse with itself alone,)
As high as Heaven, as low as Hell,—
He would be summoned and must go :
For had not Gian stabbed Giacomo ?

Therefore the bread he had to eat
Seemed brackish, less like corn than tares ;
And the rush-strown accustomed stairs
Each day were steeper to his feet ;
And when the night-vigil was done,
His brows would ache to feel the sun.

Nevertheless, when from his kin
There came the tidings how at last
In Florence a decree was pass'd
Whereby all banished folk might win
Free pardon, so a fine were paid
And act of public penance made,—

This Dante writ in answer thus,
Words such as these : " That clearly they
In Florence must not have to say,—
The man abode aloof from us
Nigh fifteen years, yet lastly skulk'd
Hither to candleshrift and mulct.

" That he was one the Heavens forbid
To traffic in God's justice sold
By market-weight of earthly gold,

Or to bow down over the lid
Of steaming censers, and so be
Made clean of manhood's obloquy.

"That since no gate led, by God's will,
To Florence, but the one whereat
The priests and money-changers sat,
He still would wander; for that still,
Even through the body's prison-bars,
His soul possessed the sun and stars."

Such were his words. It is indeed
For ever well our singers should
Utter good words and know them good
Not through song only; with close heed
Lest, having spent for the work's sake.
Six days, the man be left to make.

Months o'er Verona, till the feast
Was come for Florence the Free Town:
And at the shrine of Baptist John
The exiles, girt with many a priest
And carrying candles as they went,
Were held to mercy of the saint.

On the high seats in sober state,—
Gold neck-chains range o'er range below
Gold screen-work where the lilies grow,—
The heads of the Republic sate,
Marking the humbled face go by
Each one of his house-enemy.

And as each proscript rose and stood
From kneeling in the ashen dust
On the shrine-steps some magnate thrust

A beard into the velvet hood
Of his front colleague's gown, to see
The cinders stuck in his bare knee.

Tosinghi passed, Manelli passed,
Rinucci passed, each in his place;
But not an Alighieri's face
Went by that day from first to last
In the Republic's triumph; nor
A foot came home to Dante's door.

(Respublica—a public thing:
A shameful shameless prostitute,
Whose lust with one lord may not suit,
So takes by turn its revelling
A night with each, till each at morn
Is stripped and beaten forth forlorn,

And leaves her, cursing her. If she,
Indeed, have not some spice-draught, hid
In scent under a silver lid,
To drench his open throat with—he
Once hard asleep; and thrust him not
At dawn beneath the stairs to rot.

Such *this* Republic!—not the Maid
He yearned for; she who yet should stand
With Heaven's accepted hand in hand,
Invulnerable and unbetray'd:
To whom, even as to God, should be
Obeisance one with Liberty.)

Years filled out their twelve moons, and ceased
One in another; and alway
There were the whole twelve hours each day

And each night as the years increased ;
And rising moon and setting sun
Beheld that Dante's work was done.

What of his work for Florence ? Well
It was, he knew, and well must be.
Yet evermore her hate's decree
Dwelt in his thought intolerable :—
His body to be burned,*—his soul
To beat its wings at hope's vain goal.

What of his work for Beatrice ?
Now well-nigh was the third song writ,—
The stars a third time sealing it
With sudden music of pure peace :
For echoing thrice the threefold song,
The unnumbered stars the tone prolong.†

Each hour, as then the Vision pass'd,
He heard the utter harmony
Of the nine trembling spheres, till she
Bowed her eyes towards him in the last,
So that all ended with her eyes,
Hell, Purgatory, Paradise.

"It is my trust, as the years fall,
To write more worthily of her
Who now, being made God's minister,
Looks on His visage and knows all."
Such was the hope that love dar'd blend
With grief's slow fires, to make an end

* Such was the last sentence passed by Florence against Dante, as a recalcitrant exile.

† E quindi uscimmo a riveder le *stelle*.—INFERNO.
Puro e disposto a salire alle *stelle*.—PURGATORIO.
L'amor che muove il sole e l'altre *stelle*.—PARADISO.

Of the "New Life," his youth's dear book:
Adding thereunto: "In such trust
I labor, and believe I must
Accomplish this which my soul took
In charge, if God, my Lord and hers,
Leave my life with me a few years."

The trust which he had borne in youth
Was all at length accomplished. He
At length had written worthily—
Yea even of her; no rhymes uncouth
'Twixt tongue and tongue; but by God's aid
The first words Italy had said.

Ah! haply now the heavenly guide
Was not the last form seen by him:
But there that Beatrice stood slim
And bowed in passing at his side,
For whom in youth his heart made moan
Then when the city sat alone.*

Clearly himself: the same whom he
Met, not past girlhood, in the street,
Low-bosomed and with hidden feet;
And then as woman perfectly,
In years that followed, many an once,—
And now at last among the suns

In that high vision. But indeed
It may be memory might recall
Last to him then the first of all,—
The child his boyhood bore in heed
Nine years. At length the voice brought peace,—
"Even I, even I am Beatrice."

* *Quomodo sedet sola civitas!*—The words quoted by Dante in the Vita Nuova when he speaks of the death of Beatrice.

All this, being there, we had not seen.
Seen only was the shadow wrought
On the strong features bound in thought;
The vagueness gaining gait and mien;
The white streaks gathering clear to view
In the burnt beard the women knew.

For a tale tells that on his track,
As through Verona's streets he went,
This saying certain women sent:—
"Lo, he that strolls to Hell and back
At will! Behold him, how Hell's reek
Has crisped his beard and singed his cheek."

"Whereat" (Boccaccio's words) "he smil'd
For pride in fame." It might be so:
Nevertheless we cannot know
If haply he were not beguil'd
To bitter mirth, who scarce could tell
If he indeed were back from Hell.

So the day came, after a space,
When Dante felt assured that there
The sunshine must lie sicklier
Even than in any other place,
Save only Florence. When that day
Had come, he rose and went his way.

He went and turned not. From his shoes
It may be that he shook the dust,
As every righteous dealer must
Once and again ere life can close:
And unaccomplished destiny
Struck cold his forehead, it may be.

No book keeps record how the Prince
Sunned himself out of Dante's reach,
Nor how the Jester stank in speech :
While courtiers, used to cringe and wince,
Poets and harlots, all the throng,
Let loose their scandal and their song.

No book keeps record if the seat
Which Dante held at his host's board
Were sat in next by clerk or lord,—
If leman lolled with dainty feet
At ease, or hostage brooded there,
Or priest lacked silence for his prayer.

Eat and wash hands, Can Grande ;—scarce
We know their deeds now : hands which fed
Our Dante with that bitter bread ;
And thou the watch-dog of those stairs
Which, of all paths his feet knew well,
Were steeper found than Heaven or Hell.

A LAST CONFESSION.

(*Regno Lombardo Veneto*,—1848.)

* * * * * * * *

Our Lombard country-girls along the coast
Wear daggers in their garters : for they know
That they might hate another girl to death
Or meet a German lover. Such a knife
I bought her, with a hilt of horn and pearl.

Father, you cannot know of all my thoughts
That day in going to meet her,—that last day
For the last time, she said ;—of all the love
And all the hopeless hope that she might change
And go back with me. Ah ! and everywhere,
At places we both knew along the road,
Some fresh shape of herself as once she was
Grew present at my side ; until it seemed—
So close they gathered round me—they would all
Be with me when I reached the spot at last,
To plead my cause with her against herself
So changed. O Father, if you knew all this
You cannot know, then you would know too, Father.
And only then, if God can pardon me.
What can be told I'll tell, if you will hear.

I passed a village-fair upon my road,
And thought, being empty-handed, I would take
Some little present : such might prove, I said,
Either a pledge between us, or (God help me !)
A parting gift. And there it was I bought
The knife I spoke of, such as women wear.

That day, some three hours afterwards, I found
For certain, it must be a parting gift.
And, standing silent now at last, I looked
Into her scornful face ; and heard the sea
Still trying hard to din into my ears
Some speech it knew which still might change her heart,
If only it could make me understand.
One moment thus. Another, and her face
Seemed further off than the last line of sea,
So that I thought, if now she were to speak
I could not hear her. Then again I knew

All, as we stood together on the sand
At Iglio, in the first thin shade o' the hills.

"Take it," I said, and held it out to her,
While the hilt glanced within my trembling hold;
"Take it and keep it for my sake," I said.
Her neck unbent not, neither did her eyes
Move, nor her foot left beating of the sand;
Only she put it by from her and laughed.

Father, you hear my speech and not her laugh;
But God heard that. Will God remember all?

It was another laugh than the sweet sound
Which rose from her sweet childish heart, that day
Eleven years before, when first I found her
Alone upon the hill-side; and her curls
Shook down in the warm grass as she looked up
Out of her curls in my eyes bent to hers.
She might have served a painter to portray
That heavenly child which in the latter days
Shall walk between the lion and the lamb.
I had been for nights in hiding, worn and sick
And hardly fed; and so her words at first
Seemed fitful like the talking of the trees
And voices in the air that knew my name.
And I remember that I sat me down
Upon the slope with her, and thought the world
Must be all over or had never been,
We seemed there so alone. And soon she told me
Her parents both were gone away from her.
I thought perhaps she meant that they had died;
But when I asked her this, she looked again
Into my face and said that yestereve
They kissed her long, and wept and made her weep,

And gave her all the bread they had with them,
And then had gone together up the hill
Where we were sitting now, and had walked on
Into the great red light; "and so," she said,
"I have come up here too; and when this evening
They step out of the light as they stepped in,
I shall be here to kiss them." And she laughed.

Then I bethought me suddenly of the famine;
And how the church-steps throughout all the town,
When last I had been there a month ago,
Swarmed with starved folk; and how the bread was weighed
By Austrians armed; and women that I knew
For wives and mothers walked the public street,
Saying aloud that if their husbands feared
To snatch the children's food, themselves would stay
Till they had earned it there. So then this child
Was piteous to me; for all told me then
Her parents must have left her to God's chance,
To man's or to the Church's charity,
Because of the great famine, rather than
To watch her growing thin between their knees.
With that, God took my mother's voice and spoke,
And sights and sounds came back and things long since,
And all my childhood found me on the hills;
And so I took her with me.
I was young,
Scarce man then, Father: but the cause which gave
The wounds I die of now had brought me then
Some wounds already; and I lived alone,
As any hiding hunted man must live.
It was no easy thing to keep a child
In safety; for herself it was not safe,

And doubled my own danger : but I knew
That God would help me.
Yet a little while
Pardon me, Father, if I pause. I think
I have been speaking to you of some matters
There was no need to speak of, have I not ?
You do not know how clearly those things stood
Within my mind, which I have spoken of,
Nor how they strove for utterance. Life all past
Is like the sky when the sun sets in it,
Clearest where furtherest off.
I told you how
She scorned my parting gift and laughed. And yet
A woman's laugh's another thing sometimes :
I think they laugh in Heaven. I know last night
I dreamed I saw into the garden of God,
Where women walked whose painted images
I have seen with candles round them in the church.
They bent this way and that, one to another,
Playing : and over the long golden hair
Of each there floated like a ring of fire
Which when she stooped stooped with her, and when she rose
Rose with her. Then a breeze flew in among them,
As if a window had been opened in heaven
For God to give His blessing from, before
This world of ours should set ; (for in my dream
I thought our world was setting, and the sun
Flared, a spent taper ;) and beneath that gust
The rings of light quivered like forest-leaves.
Then all the blessed maidens who were there
Stood up together, as it were a voice
That called them ; and they threw their tresses back,
And smote their palms, and all laughed up at once,

For the strong heavenly joy they had in them
To hear God bless the world. Wherewith I woke:
And looking round, I saw as usual
That she was standing there with her long locks
Pressed to her side; and her laugh ended theirs.

For always when I see her now, she laughs.
And yet her childish laughter haunts me too,
The life of this dead terror; as in days
When she, a child, dwelt with me. I must tell
Something of those days yet before the end.

I brought her from the city—one such day
When she was still a merry loving child,—
The earliest gift I mind my giving her;
A little image of a flying Love
Made of our colored glass-ware, in his hands
A dart of gilded metal and a torch.
And him she kissed and me, and fain would know
Why were his poor eyes blindfold, why the wings
And why the arrow. What I knew I told
Of Venus and of Cupid,—strange old tales.
And when she heard that he could rule the loves
Of men and women, still she shook her head
And wondered; and, "Nay, nay," she murmured still,
"So strong, and he a younger child than I!"
And then she'd have me fix him on the wall
Fronting her little bed; and then again
She needs must fix him there herself, because
I gave him to her and she loved him so,
And he should make her love me better yet,
If women loved the more, the more they grew.
But the fit place upon the wall was high
For her, and so I held her in my arms:

And each time that the heavy pruning-hook
I gave her for a hammer slipped away
As it would often, still she laughed and laughed
And kissed and kissed me. But amid her mirth,
Just as she hung the image on the nail,
It slipped and all its fragments strewed the ground:
And as it fell she screamed for in her hand
The dart had entered deeply and drawn blood.
And so her laughter turned to tears; and "Oh!"
I said, the while I bandaged the small hand,—
"That I should be the first to make you bleed,
Who love and love and love you!"—kissing still
The fingers till I got her safe to bed.
And still she sobbed,—"not for the pain at all,"
She said, "but for the Love, the poor good Love
You gave me." So she cried herself to sleep.

Another later thing comes back to me,
'Twas in those hardest foulest days of all,
When still from his shut palace, sitting clean
Above the splash of blood, old Metternich
(May his soul die, and never-dying worms
Feast on its pain for ever!) used to thin
His year's doomed hundreds daintily, each month
Thirties and fifties. This time, as I think,
Was when his thrift forbade the poor to take
That evil brackish salt which the dry rocks
Keep all through winter when the sea draws in,
The first I heard of it was a chance shot
In the street here and there, and on the stones
A stumbling clatter as of horse hemmed round.
Then, when she saw me hurry out of doors,
My gun slung at my shoulder and my knife
Stuck in my girdle, she smoothed down my hair
And laughed to see me look so brave, and leaped

Up to my neck and kissed me. She was still
A child ; and yet that kiss was on my lips
So hot all day where the smoke shut us in.

For now, being always with her, the first love
I had—the father's, brother's love—was changed,
I think, in somewise ; like a holy thought
Which is a prayer before one knows of it.
The first time I perceived this, I remember,
Was once when after hunting I came home
Weary, and she brought food and fruit for me,
And sat down at my feet upon the floor
Leaning against my side. But when I felt
Her sweet head reach from that low seat of hers
So high as to be laid upon my heart,
I turned and looked upon my darling there
And marked for the first time how tall she was;
And my heart beat with so much violence
Under her cheek, I thought she could not choose
But wonder at it soon and ask me why;
And so I bade her rise and eat with me.
And when, remembering all and counting back
The time, I made out fourteen years for her
And told her so, she gazed at me with eyes
As of the sky and sea on a gray day,
And drew her long hands through her hair, and asked
me
If she was not a woman ; and then laughed :
And as she stooped in laughing, I could see
Beneath the growing throat the breasts half-globed
Like folded lilies deepset in the stream.

Yes, let me think of her as then ; for so
Her image, Father, is not like the sights
Which come when you are gone, She had a mouth

Made to bring death to life,—the underlip
Sucked in, as if it strove to kiss itself.
Her face was pearly pale, as when one stoops
Over wan water ; and the dark crisped hair
And the hair's shadow made it paler still :—
Deep-serried locks, the dimness of the cloud
Where the moon's gaze is set in eddying gloom.
Her body bore her neck as the tree's stem
Bears the top branch ; and as the branch sustains
The flower of the year's pride, her high neck bore
That face made wonderful with night and day.
Her voice was swift, yet ever the last words
Fell lingeringly ; and rounded finger-tips
She had, that clung a little where they touched
And then were gone o' the instant. Her great eyes,
That sometimes turned half dizzily beneath
The passionate lids, as faint, when she would speak,
Had also in them hidden springs of mirth,
Which under the dark lashes evermore
Shook to her laugh, as when a bird flies low
Between the water and the willow-leaves,
And the shade quivers till he wins the light.

I was a moody comrade to her then,
For all the love I bore her. Italy,
The weeping desolate mother, long has claimed
Her sons' strong arms to lean on, and their hands
To lop the poisonous thicket from her path,
Cleaving her way to light. And from her need
Had grown the fashion of my whole poor life
Which I was proud to yield her, as my father
Had yielded his. And this had come to be
A game to play, a love to clasp, a hate
To wreak, all things together that a man
Needs for his blood to ripen ; till at times

All else seemed shadows, and I wondered still
To see such life pass muster and be deemed
Time's bodily substance. In those hours, no doubt,
To the young girl my eyes were like my soul,—
Dark wells of death-in-life that yearned for day.
And though she ruled me always, I remember
That once when I was thus and she still kept
Leaping about the place and laughing, I
Did almost chide her ; whereupon she knelt
And putting her two hands into my breast
Sang me a song. Are these tears in my eyes ?
'Tis long since I have wept for anything.
I thought that song forgotten out of mind ;
And now, just as I spoke of it, it came
All back. It is but a rude thing, ill rhymed,
Such as a blind man chaunts and his dog hears
Holding the platter, when the children run
To merrier sport and leave him. Thus it goes :—

La bella donna*
Piangendo disse :
" Come son fisse
Le stelle in cielo !
Quel fiato anelo
Dello stanco sole,
Quanto m' assonna !

---

* She wept, sweet lady,
And said in weeping :
" What spell is keeping
The stars so steady ?
Why does the power
Of the sun's noon-hour
To sleep so move me ?
And the moon in heaven,
Stained where she passes
As a worn-out glass is,—
Wearily driven,
Why walks she above me ?

" Stars, moon, and sun too,
I'm tired of either
And all together !
Whom speak they unto
That I should listen ?
For very surely,
Though my arms and shoulders
Dazzle beholders,
And my eyes glisten,
All's nothing purely !
What are words said for

E la luna, macchiata
Come uno specchio
Logoro e vecchio,—
Faccia affannata,
Che cosa vuole?

"Chè stelle, luna, e sole,
Ciascun m' annoja
E m' annojano insieme;
Non me ne preme
Nè ci prendo gioja.
E veramente,
Che le spalle sien franche
E le braccia bianche
E il seno caldo e tondo,
Non mi fa niente.
Che cosa al mondo
Posso più far di questi
Se non piacciono a te, come dicesti?"

La donna rise
E riprese ridendo:—
"Questa mano che prendo
E dunque mia?

At all about them,
If he they are made for
Can do without them?"

She laughed, sweet lady,
And said in laughing:
"His hand clings half in
My own already!
Oh! do you love me?
Oh! speak of passion
In no new fashion,
No loud inveighings,
But the old sayings
You once said of me.

"You said: 'As summer,
Through boughs grown brittle,
Comes back a little
Ere frosts benumb her,—
So bring'st thou to me
All leaves and flowers,
Though autumn's gloomy
To-day in the bowers.'

"Oh! does he love me,
When my voice teaches
The very speeches
He then spoke of me?
Alas! what flavor
Still with me lingers?"
(But she laughed as my kisses
Glowed in her fingers
With love's old blisses.)
"Oh! what one favor
Remains to woo him,
Whose whole poor savor
Belongs not to him?"

Tu m' ami dunque?
Dimmelo ancora,
Non in modo qualunque,
Ma le parole
Belle e precise
Che dicesti pria.

'*Siccome suole*
La state talora
(Dicesti) *un qualche istante*
Tornare innanzi inverno,
Così tu fai ch' io scerno
Le foglie tutte quante,
Ben ch' io certo tenessi
Per passato l' autunno.

"Eccolo il mio alunno!
Io debbo insegnargli
Quei cari detti istessi
Ch' ei mi disse une una volta!
Oimè! Che cosa dargli,"
(Ma ridea piano piano
Dei baci in sulla mano,)
"Ch' ei non m' abbia da lungo tempo tolta?"

That I should sing upon this bed!—with you
To listen, and such words still left to say!
Yet was it I that sang? The voice seemed hers,
As on the very day she sang to me;
When, having done, she took out of my hand
Something that I had played with all the while
And laid it down beyond my reach; and so
Turning my face round till it fronted hers,—
"Weeping or laughing, which was best?" she said.

But these are foolish tales. How should I show
The heart that glowed then with love's heat, each day
More and more brightly?—when for long years now
The very flame that flew about the heart,
And gave it fiery wings, has come to be

The lapping blaze of hell's environment
Whose tongues all bid the molten heart despair.

Yet one more thing comes back on me to-night
Which I may tell you : for it bore my soul
Dread firstlings of the brood that rend it now.
It chanced that in our last year's wanderings
We dwelt at Monza, far away from home,
If home we had : and in the Duomo there
I sometimes entered with her when she prayed.
An image of Our Lady stands there, wrought
In marble by some great Italian hand
In the great days when she and Italy
Sat on one throne together : and to her
And to none else my loved one told her heart.
She was a woman then ; and as she knelt,—
Her sweet brow in the sweet brow's shadow there,—
They seemed two kindred forms whereby our land
(Whose work still serves the world for miracle)
Made manifest herself in womanhood.
Father, the day I speak of was the first
For weeks that I had borne her company
Into the Duomo ; and those weeks had been
Much troubled, for then first the glimpses came
Of some impenetrable restlessness
Growing in her to make her changed and cold.
And as we entered there that day, I bent
My eyes on the fair Image, and I said
Within my heart, "Oh turn her heart to me!"
And so I left her to her prayers, and went
To gaze upon the pride of Monza's shrine,
Where in the sacristy the light still falls
Upon the Iron Crown of Italy,
On whose crowned heads the day has closed, nor yet
The daybreak gilds another head to crown.

But coming back, I wondered when I saw
That the sweet Lady of her prayers now stood
Alone without her; until further off,
Before some new Madonna gaily decked,
Tinselled and gewgawed, a slight German toy,
I saw her kneel, still praying. At my step
She rose, and side by side we left the church.
I was much moved, and sharply questioned her
Of her transferred devotion; but she seemed
Stubborn and heedless; till she lightly laughed
And said: "The old Madonna? Aye indeed,
She had my old thoughts,—this one has my new."
Then silent to the soul I held my way:
And from the fountains of the public place
Unto the pigeon-haunted pinnacles,
Bright wings and water winnowed the bright air;
And stately with her laugh's subsiding smile
She went, with clear-swayed waist and towering neck
And hands held light before her; and the face
Which long had made a day in my life's night
Was night in day to me; as all men's eyes
Turned on her beauty, and she seemed to tread
Beyond my heart to the world made for her.

Ah, there! my wounds will snatch my sense again:
The pain comes billowing on like a full cloud
Of thunder, and the flash that breaks from it
Leaves my brain burning. That's the wound he gave,
The Austrian whose white coat I still made match
With his white face, only the two grew red
As suits his trade. The devil makes them wear
White for a livery, that the blood may show
Braver that brings them to him. So he looks
Sheer o'er the field and knows his own at once.

Give me a draught of water in that cup;
My voice feels thick; perhaps you do not hear;
But you *must* hear. If you mistake my words
And so absolve me, I am sure the blessing
Will burn my soul. If you mistake my words
And so absolve me, Father, the great sin
Is yours, not mine: mark this: your soul shall burn
With mine for it. I have seen pictures where
Souls burned with Latin shriekings in their mouths:
Shall my end be as theirs? Nay, but I know
'Tis you shall shriek in Latin. Some bell rings,
Rings through my brain: it strikes the hour in hell.

You see I cannot, Father; I have tried,
But cannot, as you see. These twenty times
Beginning, I have come to the same point
And stopped. Beyond, there are but broken words
Which will not let you understand my tale.
It is that then we have her with us here,
As when she wrung her hair out in my dream
To-night, till all the darkness reeked of it.
Her hair is always wet, for she has kept
Its tresses wrapped about her side for years;
And when she wrung them round over the floor,
I heard the blood between her fingers hiss;
So that I sat up in my bed and screamed
Once and again; and once to once, she laughed.
Look that you turn not now,—she's at your back:
Gather your robe up, Father, and keep close,
Or she'll sit down on it and send you mad.

At Iglio in the first thin shade o' the hills
The sand is black and red. The black was black
When what was spilt that day sank into it,
And the red scarcely darkened. There I stood
This night with her, and saw the sand the same.

* * * * * *

What would you have me tell you ? Father, father,
How shall I make you know ? You have not known
The dreadful soul of woman, who one day
Forgets the old and takes the new to heart,
Forgets what man remembers, and therewith
Forgets the man. Nor can I clearly tell
How the change happened between her and me.
Her eyes looked on me from an emptied heart
When most my heart was full of her ; and still
In every corner of myself I sought
To find what service failed her ; and no less
Than in the good time past, there all was hers.
What do you love ? Your Heaven ? Conceive it spread
For one first year of all eternity
All round you with all joys and gifts of God ;
And then when most your soul is blent with it
And all yields song together,—then it stands
O' the sudden like a pool that once gave back
Your image, but now drowns it and is clear
Again,—or like a sun bewitched, that burns
Your shadow from you, and still shines in sight.
How could you bear it ? Would you not cry out,
Among those eyes grown blind to you, those ears
That hear no more your voice you hear the same,—
" God ! what is left but hell for company,
But hell, hell, hell ? "—until the name so breathed
Whirled with hot wind and sucked you down in fire ?
Even so I stood the day her empty heart
Left her place empty in our home, while yet
I knew not why she went nor where she went
Nor how to reach her : so I stood the day
When to my prayers at last one sight of her
Was granted, and I looked on heaven made pale
With scorn, and heard heaven mock me in that laugh.

O sweet, long sweet! Was that some ghost of you,
Even as your ghost that haunts me now,—twin shapes
Of fear and hatred? May I find you yet
Mine when death wakes? Ah! be it even in flame,
We may have sweetness yet, if you but say
As once in childish sorrow: "Not my pain,
My pain was nothing: oh your poor poor love,
Your broken love!"

My Father, have I not
Yet told you the last things of that last day
On which I went to meet her by the sea?
O God, O God! but I must tell you all.

Midway upon my journey, when I stopped
To buy the dagger at the village fair,
I saw two cursed rats about the place
I knew for spies—blood-sellers both. That day
Was not yet over; for three hours to come
I prized my life: and so I looked around
For safety. A poor painted mountebank
Was playing tricks and shouting in a crowd.
I knew he must have heard my name, so I
Pushed past and whispered to him who I was,
And of my danger. Straight he hustled me
Into his booth, as it were in the trick,
And brought me out next minute with my face
All smeared in patches and a zany's gown;
And there I handed him his cups and balls
And swung the sand-bags round to clear the ring
For half an hour. The spies came once and looked;
And while they stopped, and made all sights and sounds
Sharp to my startled senses, I remember
A woman laughed above me. I looked up
And saw where a brown-shouldered harlot leaned

Half through a tavern window thick with vine.
Some man had come behind her in the room
And caught her by her arms, and she had turned
With that coarse empty laugh on him, as now
He munched her neck with kisses, while the vine
Crawled in her back.

And three hours afterwards,
When she that I had run all risks to meet
Laughed as I told you, my life burned to death
Within me, for I thought it like the laugh
Heard at the fair. She had not left me long ;
But all she might have changed to, or might change to,
(I know nought since—she never speaks a word—)
Seemed in that laugh. Have I not told you yet,
Not told you all this time what happened, Father,
When I had offered her the little knife,
And bade her keep it for my sake that loved her,
And she had laughed ? Have I not told you yet ?

"Take it," I said to her the second time,
"Take it and keep it." And then came a fire
That burnt my hand ; and then the fire was blood,
And sea and sky were blood and fire, and all
The day was one red blindness ; till it seemed,
Within the whirling brain's eclipse, that she
Or I or all things bled or burned to death.
And then I found her laid against my feet
And knew that I had stabbed her, and saw still
Her look in falling. For she took the knife
Deep in her heart, even as I bade her then,
And fell ; and her stiff bodice scooped the sand
Into her bosom.

And she keeps it, see,
Do you not see she keeps it ?—there, beneath

Wet fingers and wet tresses, in her heart.
For look you, when she stirs her hand, it shows
The little hilt of horn and pearl,—even such
A dagger as our women of the coast
Twist in their garters.

Father, I have done:
And from her side she now unwinds the thick
Dark hair; all round her side it is wet through,
But, like the sand at Iglio, does not change.
Now you may see the dagger clearly. Father,
I have told all: tell me at once what hope
Can reach me still. For now she draws it out
Slowly, and only smiles as yet: look, Father,
She scarcely smiles: but I shall hear her laugh
Soon, when she shows the crimson steel to God.

THE BRIDE'S PRELUDE.

"Sister," said busy Amelotte
To listless Aloÿse;
"Along your wedding-road the wheat
Bends as to hear your horse's feet,
And the noonday stands still for heat."

Amelotte laughed into the air
With eyes that sought the sun:
But where the walls in long brocade
Were screened, as one who is afraid
Sat Aloÿse within the shade.

And even in shade was gleam enough
To shut out full repose
From the bride's 'tiring-chamber, which
Was like the inner alter-niche
Whose dimness worship has made rich.

Within the window's heaped recess
The light was counterchanged
In blent reflexes manifold
From perfume-caskets of wrought gold
And gems the bride's hair could not hold

All thrust together: and with these
A slim-curved lute, which now,
At Amelotte's sudden passing there,
Was swept in somewise unaware,
And shook to music the close air.

Against the haloed lattice-panes
The bridesmaid sunned her breast;
Then to the glass turned tall and free,
And braced and shifted daintily
Her loin-belt through her cote-hardie.

The belt was silver, and the clasp
Of lozenged arm-bearings;
A world of mirrored tints minute
The rippling sunshine wrought into 't,
That flushed her hand and warmed her foot.

At least an hour had Aloÿse,—
Her jewels in her hair,—
Her white gown, as became a bride,
Quartered in silver at each side,—
Sat thus aloof, as if to hide.

Over her bosom, that lay still,
The vest was rich in grain,
With close pearls wholly overset:
Around her throat the fastenings met
Of chevesayle and mantelet.

Her arms were laid along her lap
With the hands open : life
Itself did seem a fault in her ;
Beneath the drooping brows, the stir
Of thought made noonday heavier.

Long sat she silent ; and then raised
Her head, with such a gasp
As while she summoned breath to speak
Fanned high that furnace in the cheek
But sucked the heart-pulse cold and weak.

(Oh gather round her now, all ye
Past seasons of her fear,—
Sick springs, and summers deadly cold !
To flight your hovering wings unfold,
For now your secret shall be told.

Ye many sunlights, barbed with darts
Of dread detecting flame,—
Gaunt moonlights that like sentinels
Went past with iron clank of bells,—
Draw round and render up your spells !)

"Sister," said Aloÿse, "I had
A thing to tell thee of
Long since, and could not. But do thou
Kneel first in prayer awhile, and bow
Thine heart, and I will tell thee now."

Amelotte wondered with her eyes ;
But her heart said in her :
" Dear Aloÿse would have me pray
Because the awe she feels to-day
Must need more prayers than she can say."

So Amelotte put by the folds
That covered up her feet,
And knelt,—beyond the arras'd gloom
And the hot window's dull perfume,—
Where day was stillest in the room.

"Queen Mary, hear," she said, "and say
To Jesus the Lord Christ,
This bride's new joy, which He confers,
New joy to many ministers,
And many griefs are bound in hers."

The bride turned in her chair, and hid
Her face against the back,
And took her pearl-girt elbows in
Her hands, and could not yet begin,
But shuddering, uttered, "Urscelyn!"

Most weak she was; for as she pressed
Her hand against her throat,
Along the arras she let trail
Her face, as if all heart did fail,
And sat with shut eyes, dumb and pale.

Amelotte still was on her knees
As she had kneeled to pray.
Deeming her sister swooned, she thought,
At first, some succor to have brought;
But Aloÿse rocked, as one distraught.

She would have pushed the lattice wide
To gain what breeze might be;
But marking that no leaf once beat
The outside casement, it seemed meet
Not to bring in more scent and heat.

So she said only : " Aloÿse,
Sister, when happened it
At any time that the bride came
To ill, or spoke in fear of shame
When speaking first the bridegroom's name ?"

A bird had out its song and ceased
Ere the bride spoke. At length
She said : " The name is as the thing :—
Sin hath no second christening,
And shame is all that shame can bring.

" In divers places many an while
I would have told thee this ;
But faintness took me, or a fit
Like fever. God would not permit
That I should change thine eyes with it.

" Yet once I spoke, hadst thou but heard :—
That time we wandered out
All the sun's hours, but missed our way
When evening darkened, and so lay
The whole night covered up in hay.

" At last my face was hidden : so,
Having God's hint, I paused
Not long ; but drew myself more near
Where thou wast laid, and shook off fear,
And whispered quick into thine ear

" Something of the whole tale. At first
I lay and bit my hair
For the sore silence thou didst keep :
Till, as thy breath came long and deep,
I knew that thou hadst been asleep.

"The moon was covered, but the stars
Lasted till morning broke.
Awake, thou told'st me that thy dream
Had been of me,—that all did seem
At jar,—but that it was a dream.

"I knew God's hand and might not speak.
After that night I kept
Silence and let the record swell :
Till now there is much more to tell
Which must be told out ill or well."

She paused then, weary, with dry lips
Apart. From the outside
By fits there boomed a dull report
From where i' the hanging tennis-court
The bridegroom's retinue made sport.

The room lay still in dusty glare,
Having no sound through it
Except the chirp of a caged bird
That came and ceased : and if she stirred,
Amelotte's raiment could be heard.

Quoth Amelotte : "The night this chanced
Was a late summer night
Last year ! What secret, for Christ's love,
Keep'st thou since then ? Mary above !
What thing is this thou speakest of ?

"Mary and Christ ! Lest when 'tis told
I should be prone to wrath,—
This prayer beforehand ! How she errs
Soe'er, take count of grief like hers,
Whereof the days are turned to years !"

She bowed her neck, and having said,
Kept on her knees to hear;
And then, because strained thought demands
Quiet before it understands,
Darkened her eyesight with her hands.

So when at last her sister spoke,
She did not see the pain
O' the mouth nor the ashamèd eyes,
But marked the breath that came in sighs
And the half-pausing for replies.

This was the bride's sad prelude-strain:—
"I' the convent where a girl
I dwelt till near my womanhood,
I had but preachings of the rood
And Aves told in solitude.

"To spend my heart on: and my hand
Had but the weary skill
To eke out upon silken cloth
Christ's visage, or the long bright growth
Of Mary's hair, or Satan wroth.

"So when at last I went, and thou,
A child not known before,
Didst come to take the place I left,—
My limbs, after such lifelong theft
Of life, could he but little deft.

"In all that ministers delight
To noble women: I
Had learned no word of youth's discourse,
Nor gazed on games of warriors,
Nor trained a hound, nor ruled a horse.

"Besides, the daily life i' the sun
Made me at first hold back.
To thee this came at once; to me
It crept with pauses timidly;
I am not blithe and strong like thee.

"Yet my feet liked the dances well,
The songs went to my voice,
The music made me shake and weak;
And often, all night long, my sleep
Gave dreams I had been fain to keep.

"But though I loved not holy things,
To hear them scorned brought pain,—
They were my childhood; and these dames
Were merely perjured in saints' names
And fixed upon saints' days for games.

"And sometimes when my father rode
To hunt with his loud friends,
I dared not bring him to be quaff'd,
As my wont was, his stirrup-draught,
Because they jested so and laugh'd.

"At last one day my brothers said,
'The girl must not grow thus,—
Bring her a jennet,—she shall ride.'
They helped my mounting, and I tried
To laugh with them and keep their side.

"But brakes were rough and bents were steep
Upon our path that day:
My palfrey threw me; and I went
Upon men's shoulders home, sore spent,
While the chase followed up the scent.

"Our shrift-father (and he alone
Of all the household there
Had skill in leechcraft,) was away
When I reached home. I tossed, and lay
Sullen with anguish the whole day.

"For the day passed ere some one brought
To mind that in the hunt
Rode a young lord she named, long bred
Among the priests, whose art (she said)
Might chance to stand me in much stead.

"I bade them seek and summon him:
But long ere this, the chase
Had scattered, and he was not found.
I lay in the same weary stound,
Therefore, until the night came round.

"It was dead night and near on twelve
When the horse-tramp at length
Beat up the echoes of the court:
By then, my feverish breath was short
With pain the sense could scarce support.

"My fond nurse sitting near my feet
Rose softly,—her lamp's flame
Held in her hand, lest it should make
My heated lids, in passing, ache;
And she passed softly, for my sake.

"Returning soon, she brought the youth
They spoke of. Meek he seemed,
But good knights held him of stout heart.
He was akin to us in part,
And bore our shield, but barred athwart.

"I now remembered to have seen
His face, and heard him praised
For letter-lore and medicine,
Seeing his youth was nurtured in
Priests' knowledge, as mine own had been."

The bride's voice did not weaken here,
Yet by her sudden pause
She seemed to look for questioning;
Or else (small need though) 'twas to bring
Well to her mind the bygone thing.

Her thought, long stagnant, stirred by speech,
Gave her a sick recoil;
As, dip thy fingers through the green
That masks a pool,—where they have been
The naked depth is black between.

Amelotte kept her knees; her face
Was shut within her hands,
As it had been throughout the tale;
Her forehead's whiteness might avail
Nothing to say if she were pale.

Although the lattice had dropped loose,
There was no wind; the heat
Being so at rest that Amelotte
Heard far beneath the plunge and float
Of a hound swimming in the moat.

Some minutes since, two rooks had toiled
Home to the nests that crowned
Ancestral ash-trees. Through the glare
Beating again, they seemed to tear
With that thick caw the woof o' the air.

But else, 'twas at the dead of noon
Absolute silence ; all,
From the raised bridge and guarded sconce
To green-clad places of pleasaunce
Where the long lake was white with swans.

Amelotte spoke not any word
Nor moved she once ; but felt
Between her hands in narrow space
Her own hot breath upon her face,
And kept in silence the same place.

Aloÿse did not hear at all
The sounds without. She heard
The inward voice (past help obey'd)
Which might not slacken nor be stay'd,
But urged her till the whole were said.

Therefore she spoke again : "That night
But little could be done :
My foot, held in my nurse's hands,
He swathed up heedfully in bands,
And for my rest gave close commands.

"I slept till noon, but an ill sleep
Of dreams : through all that day
My side was stiff and caught the breath ;
Next day, such pain as sickeneth
Took me, and I was nigh to death.

"Life strove, Death claimed me for his own,
Through days and nights : but now
'Twas the good father tended me,
Having returned. Still, I did see
The youth I spoke of constantly.

"For he would with my brothers come
To stay beside my couch,
And fix my eyes against his own,
Noting my pulse; or else alone,
To sit at gaze while I made moan.

"(Some nights I knew he kept the watch,
Because my women laid
The rushes thick for his steel shoes.)
Through many days this pain did use
The life God would not let me lose.

"At length, with my good nurse to aid,
I could walk forth again:
And still, as one who broods or grieves,
At noons I'd meet him and at eves,
With idle feet that drove the leaves.

"The day when I first walked alone
Was thinned in grass and leaf,
And yet a goodly day o' the year:
The last bird's cry upon mine ear
Left my brain weak, it was so clear.

"The tears were sharp within mine eyes.
I sat down, being glad,
And wept; but stayed the sudden flow
Anon, for footsteps that fell slow;
'Twas that youth passed me, bowing low.

"He passed me without speech; but when,
At least an hour gone by,
Rethreading the same covert, he
Saw I was still beneath the tree,
He spoke and sat him down with me.

"Little we said; nor one heart heard
Even what was said within;
And, faltering some farewell, I soon
Rose up; but then i' the autumn noon
My feeble brain whirled like a swoon.

"He made me sit. 'Cousin, I grieve
Your sickness stays by you.'
'I would,' said I, 'that you did err
So grieving. I am wearier
Than death, of the sickening dying year.'

"He answered: 'If your weariness
Accepts a remedy,
I hold one and can give it you.'
I gazed: 'What ministers thereto,
Be sure,' I said, 'that I will do.'

"He went on quickly:—'Twas a cure
He had not ever named
Unto our kin lest they should stint
Their favor, for some foolish hint
Of wizardry or magic in't:

"But that if he were let to come
Within my bower that night,
(My women still attending me,
He said, while he remain'd there,) he
Could teach me the cure privily.

"I bade him come that night. He came;
But little in his speech
Was cure or sickness spoken of,
Only a passionate fierce love
That clamored upon God above.

"My women wondered, leaning close
Aloof. At mine own heart
I think great wonder was not stirr'd.
I dared not listen, yet I heard
His tangled speech, word within word.

"He craved my pardon first,—all else
Wild tumult. In the end
He remained silent at my feet
Fumbling the rushes. Strange quick heat
Made all the blood of my life meet.

"And lo! I loved him. I but said,
If he would leave me then,
His hope some future might forecast.
His hot lips stung my hand: at last
My damsels led him forth in haste."

The bride took breath to pause; and turned
Her gaze where Amelotte
Knelt,—the gold hair upon her back
Quite still in all its threads,—the track
Of her still shadow sharp and black.

That listening without sight had grown
To stealthy dread; and now
That the one sound she had to mark
Left her alone too, she was stark
Afraid, as children in the dark.

Her fingers felt her temples beat;
Then came that brain-sickness
Which thinks to scream, and murmureth;
And pent between her hands, the breath
Was damp against her face like death.

Her arms both fell at once ; but when
She gasped upon the light,
Her sense returned. She would have pray'd
To change whatever words still stay'd
Behind, but felt there was no aid.

So she rose up, and having gone
Within the window's arch
Once more, she sat there, all intent
On torturing doubts, and once more bent
To hear, in mute bewilderment.

But Aloÿse still paused. Thereon
Amelotte gathered voice
In somewise from the torpid fear
Coiled round her spirit. Low but clear
She said : "Speak, sister ; for I hear."

But Aloÿse threw up her neck
And called the name of God :—
"Judge, God, 'twixt her and me to-day!
She knows how hard this is to say,
Yet will not have one word away."

Her sister was quite silent. Then
Afresh :—"Not she, dear Lord!
Thou be my judge, on Thee I call!"
She ceased,—her forehead smote the wall:
"Is there a God," she said, "at all?"

Amelotte shuddered at the soul,
But did not speak. The pause
Was long this time. At length the bride
Pressed her hand hard against her side,
And trembling between shame and pride

Said by fierce effort: "From that night
Often at nights we met:
That night, his passion could but rave:
The next, what grace his lips did crave
I knew not, but I know I gave."

Where Amelotte was sitting, all
The light and warmth of day
Were so upon her without shade
That the thing seemed by sunshine made
Most foul and wanton to be said.

She would have questioned more, and known
The whole truth at its worst,
But held her silent, in mere shame
Of day. 'Twas only these words came:—
"Sister, thou hast not said his name."

"Sister," quoth Aloÿse, "Thou know'st
His name. I said that he
Was in a manner of our kin.
Waiting the title he might win,
They call him the Lord Urscelyn."

The bridegroom's name, to Amelotte
Daily familiar,—heard
Thus in this dreadful history,—
Was dreadful to her; as might be
Thine own voice speaking unto thee.

The day's mid-hour was almost full;
Upon the dial-plate
The angel's sword stood near at One.
An hour's remaining yet; the sun
Will not decrease till all be done.

Through the bride's lattice there crept in
At whiles (from where the train
Of minstrels, till the marriage-call,
Loitered at windows of the wall,)
Stray lute-notes, sweet and musical.

They clung in the green growths and moss
Against the outside stone ;
Low like dirge-wail or requiem
They murmured, lost 'twixt leaf and stem :
There was no wind to carry them.

Amelotte gathered herself back
Into the wide recess
That the sun flooded : it o'erspread
Like flame the hair upon her head
And fringed her face with burning red.

All things seemed shaken and at change :
A silent place o' the hills
She knew, unto her spirit came :
Within herself she said its name
And wondered was it still the same.

The bride (whom silence goaded) now
Said strongly,—her despair
By stubborn will kept underneath :—
"Sister, 'twere well thou didst not breathe
That curse of thine. Give me my wreath."

"Sister," said Amelotte, "abide
In peace. Be God thy judge,
As thou hast said—not I. For me,
I merely will thank God that he
Whom thou hast lovèd loveth thee."

Then Aloÿse lay back, and laughed
With wan lips bitterly,
Saying, "Nay, thank thou God for this,—
That never any soul like his
Shall have its portion where love is."

Weary of wonder, Amelotte
Sat silent: she would ask
No more, though all was unexplained:
She was too weak; the ache still pained
Her eyes,—her forehead's pulse remained.

The silence lengthened. Aloÿse
Was fain to turn her face
Apart to where the arras told
Two Testaments, the New and Old,
In shapes and meanings manifold.

One solace that was gained, she hid.
Her sister, from whose curse
Her heart recoiled, had blessed instead;
Yet would not her pride have it said
How much the blessing comforted.

Only, on looking round again
After some while, the face
Which from the arras turned away
Was more at peace and less at bay
With shame than it had been that day.

She spoke right on, as if no pause
Had come between her speech:
"That year from warmth grew bleak and pass'd,"
She said: "the days from first to last
How slow,—woe's me! the nights how fast!

"From first to last it was not known:
My nurse, and of my train
Some four or five, alone could tell
What terror kept inscrutable;
There was good need to guard it well.

"Not the guilt only made the shame,
But he was without land
And born amiss. He had but come
To train his youth here at our home,
And, being man, depart therefrom.

"Of the whole time each single day
Brought fear and great unrest:
It seemed that all would not avail
Some once,—that my close watch would fail,
And some sign, somehow, tell the tale.

"The noble maidens that I knew,
My fellows, oftentimes
Midway in talk or sport, would look
A wonder which my fears mistook,
To see how I turned faint and shook.

"They had a game of cards, where each
By painted arms might find
What knight she should be given to.
Ever with trembling hand I threw
Lest I should learn the thing I knew.

"And once it came. And Aure d'Honvaulx
Held up the bended shield
And laughed: 'Gramercy for our share!—
If to our bridal we but fare
To smutch the blazon that we bear!"

"But proud Denise de Villenbois
Kissed me, and gave her wench
The card, and said: 'If in these bowers
You women play at paramours,
You must not mix your game with ours.'

"And one upcast it from her hand:
'Lo! see how high he'll soar!'
But then their laugh was bitterest;
For the wind veered at fate's behest
And blew it back into my breast.

"Oh! if I met him in the day
Or heard his voice,—at meals
Or at the Mass or through the hall,—
A look turned towards me would appal
My heart by seeming to know all.

"Yet I grew curious of my shame,
And sometimes in the church,
On hearing such a sin rebuked,
Have held my girdle-glass unhooked
To see how such a woman looked.

"But if at night he did not come,
I lay all deadly cold
To think they might have smitten sore
And slain him, and as the night wore,
His corpse be lying at my door.

"And entering or going forth,
Our proud shield o'er the gate
Seemed to arraign my shrinking eyes.
With tremors and unspoken lies
The year went past me in this wise.

"About the spring of the next year
An ailing fell on me;
(I had been stronger till the spring;)
'Twas mine old sickness gathering,
I thought; but 'twas another thing.

"I had such yearnings as brought tears,
And a wan dizziness:
Motion, like feeling, grew intense;
Sight was a haunting evidence
And sound a pang that snatched the sense.

"It now was hard on that great ill
Which lost our wealth from us
And all our lands. Accursed be
The peevish fools of liberty
Who will not let themselves be free!

"The Prince was fled into the west:
A price was on his blood,
But he was safe. To us his friends
He left that ruin which attends
The strife against God's secret ends.

"The league dropped all asunder,—lord,
Gentle and serf. Our house
Was marked to fall. And a day came
When half the wealth that propped our name
Went from us in a wind of flame.

"Six hours I lay upon the wall
And saw it burn. But when
It clogged the day in a black bed
Of louring vapor, I was led
Down to the postern, and we fled.

"But ere we fled, there was a voice
Which I heard speak, and say
That many of our friends, to shun
Our fate, had left us and were gone,
And that Lord Urscelyn was one.

"That name, as was its wont, made sight
And hearing whirl. I gave
No heed but only to the name:
I held my senses, dreading them,
And was at strife to look the same.

"We rode and rode. As the speed grew,
The growth of some vague curse
Swarmed in my brain. It seemed to me
Numbed by the swiftness, but would be—
That still—clear knowledge certainly.

"Night lapsed. At dawn the sea was there
And the sea-wind: afar
The ravening surge was hoarse and loud,
And underneath the dim dawn-cloud
Each stalking wave shook like a shroud.

"From my drawn litter I looked out
Unto the swarthy sea,
And knew. That voice, which late had cross'd
Mine ears, seemed with the foam uptoss'd:
I knew that Urscelyn was lost.

"Then I spake all: I turned on one
And on the other, and spake:
My curse laughed in me to behold
Their eyes: I sat up, stricken cold,
Mad of my voice till all was told.

"Oh! of my brothers, Hugues was mute,
And Giles was wild and loud,
And Raoul strained abroad his face,
As if his gnashing wrath could trace
Even there the prey that it must chase.

"And round me murmured all our train,
Hoarse as the hoarse-tongued sea;
Till Hugues from silence louring woke,
And cried: 'What ails the foolish folk?
Know ye not frenzy's lightning-stroke?'

"But my stern father came to them
And quelled them with his look,
Silent and deadly pale. Anon
I knew that we were hastening on,
My litter closed and the light gone.

"And I remember all that day
The barren bitter wind
Without, and the sea's moaning there
That I first moaned with unaware,
And when I knew, shook down my hair.

"Few followed us or faced our flight:
Once only I could hear,
Far in the front, loud scornful words,
And cries I knew of hostile lords,
And crash of spears and grind of swords.

"It was soon ended. On that day
Before the light had changed
We reached our refuge; miles of rock
Bulwarked for war; whose strength might mock
Sky, sea, or man, to storm or shock.

"Listless and feebly conscious, I
Lay far within the night
Awake. The many pains incurred
That day,—the whole, said, seen or heard,—
Stayed by in me as things deferred.

"Not long. At dawn I slept. In dreams
All was passed through afresh
From end to end. As the morn heaved
Towards noon, I, waking sore aggrieved,
That I might die, cursed God, and lived.

"Many days went, and I saw none
Except my women. They
Calmed their wan faces, loving me;
And when they wept, lest I should see,
Would chaunt a desolate melody.

"Panic unthreatened shook my blood
Each sunset, all the slow
Subsiding of the turbid light.
I would rise, sister, as I might,
And bathe my forehead through the night.

"To elude madness. The stark walls
Made chill the mirk: and when
We oped our curtains, to resume
Sun-sickness after long sick gloom,
The withering sea-wind walked the room.

"Through the gaunt windows the great gales
Bore in the tattered clumps
Of waif-weed and the tamarisk-boughs;
And sea-mews, 'mid the storm's carouse,
Were flung, wild-clamoring, in the house.

"My hounds I had not; and my hawk,
Which they had saved for me,
Wanting the sun and rain to beat
His wings, soon lay with gathered feet;
And my flowers faded, lacking heat.

"Such still were griefs: for grief was still
A separate sense, untouched
Of that despair which had become
My life. Great anguish could benumb
My soul,—my heart was quarrelsome.

"Time crept. Upon a day at length
My kinsfolk sat with me:
That which they asked was bare and plain:
I answered: the whole bitter strain
Was again said, and heard again.

"Fierce Raoul snatched his sword, and turned
The point against my breast
I bared it, smiling: 'To the heart
Strike home,' I said; 'another dart
Wreaks hourly there a deadlier smart.'

"'Twas then my sire struck down the sword,
And said with shaken lips:
'She from whom all of you receive
Your life, so smiled; and I forgive.'
Thus, for my mother's sake, I live.

"But I, a mother even as she,
Turned shuddering to the wall:
For I said: 'Great God! and what would I do,
When to the sword, with the thing I knew,
I offered not one life but two!'

"Then I fell back from them, and lay
Outwearied. My tired sense
Soon filmed and settled, and like stone
I slept; till something made me moan,
And I woke up at night alone.

"I woke at midnight, cold and dazed;
Because I found myself
Seated upright, with bosom bare,
Upon my bed, combing my hair,
Ready to go, I knew not where.

"It dawned light day,—the last of those
Long months of longing days.
That noon, the change was wrought on me
In somewise,—nought to hear or see,—
Only a trance and agony."

The bride's voice failed her, from no will
To pause. The bridesmaid leaned,
And where the window-panes were white,
Looked for the day: she knew not quite
If there were either day or night.

It seemed to Aloÿse that the whole
Day's weight lay back on her
Like lead. The hours that did remain
Beat their dry wings upon her brain
Once in mid-flight, and passed again.

There hung a cage of burnt perfumes
In the recess: but these,
For some hours, weak against the sun,
Had simmered in white ash. From One
The second quarter was begun.

They had not heard the stroke. The air,
Though altered with no wind,
Breathed now by pauses, as to say:
Each breath was time that went away,—
Each pause a minute of the day.

I' the almonry, the almoner,
Hard by, had just dispensed
Church-dole and march-dole. High and wide
Now rose the shout of thanks, which cried
On God that He should bless the bride.

Its echo thrilled within their feet,
And in the furthest rooms
Was heard, where maidens flushed and gay
Wove with stooped necks the wreaths alway
Fair for the virgin's marriage-day.

The mother leaned along, in thought
After her child; till tears,
Bitter, not like a wedded girl's,
Fell down her breast along her curls,
And ran in the close work of pearls.

The speech ached at her heart. She said:
"Sweet Mary, do thou plead
This hour with thy most blessed Son
To let these shameful words atone,
That I may die when I have done."

The thought ached at her soul. Yet now:—
"Itself—that life" (she said,)
"Out of my weary life—when sense
Unclosed, was gone. What evil men's
Most evil hands had borne it thence.

"I knew, and cursed them. Still in sleep
I have my child ; and pray
To know if it indeed appear
As in my dream's perpetual sphere,
That I—death reached—may seek it there.

"Sleeping, I wept ; though until dark
A fever dried mine eyes
Kept open ; save when a tear might
Be forced from the mere ache of sight.
And I nursed hatred day and night.

"Aye, and I sought revenge by spells ;
And vainly many a time
Have laid my face into the lap
Of a wise woman, and heard clap
Her thunder, the fiend's juggling trap.

"At length I feared to curse them, lest
From evil lips the curse
Should be a blessing ; and would sit
Rocking myself and stifling it
With babbled jargon of no wit.

"But this was not at first : the days
And weeks made frenzied months
Before this came. My curses, pil'd
Then with each hour unreconcil'd,
Still wait for those who took my child."

She stopped, grown fainter. "Amelotte,
Surely," she said, "this sun
Sheds judgment-fire from the fierce south :
It does not let me breathe : the drouth
Is like sand spread within my mouth."

The bridesmaid rose. I' the outer glare
Gleamed her pale cheeks, and eyes
Sore troubled ; and aweary weigh'd
Her brows just lifted out of shade ;
And the light jarred within her head.

'Mid flowers fair-heaped there stood a bowl
With water. She therein
Through eddying bubbles slid a cup,
And offered it, being risen up,
Close to her sister's mouth, to sup.

The freshness dwelt upon her sense,
Yet did not the bride drink ;
But she dipped in her hand anon
And cooled her temples ; and all wan
With lids that held their ache, went on.

"Through those dark watches of my woe,
Time, an ill plant, had waxed
Apace. That year was finished. Dumb
And blind, life's wheel with earth's had come
Whirled round : and we might seek our home.

"Our wealth was rendered back, with wealth
Snatched from our foes. The house
Had more than its old strength and fame :
But still 'neath the fair outward claim
I rankled,—a fierce core of shame.

"It chilled me from their eyes and lips
Upon a night of those
First days of triumph, as I gazed
Listless and sick, or scarcely raised
My face to mark the sports they praised.

"The endless changes of the dance
Bewildered me : the tones
Of lute and cithern struggled tow'rds
Some sense ; and still in the last chords
The music seemed to sing wild words.

"My shame possessed me in the light
And pageant, till I swooned.
But from that hour I put my shame
From me, and cast it over them
By God's command and in God's name

"For my child's bitter sake. O thou
Once felt against my heart
With longing of the eyes,—a pain
Since to my heart forever,—then
Beheld not, and not felt again!"

She scarcely paused, continuing :—
"That year drooped weak in March ;
And April, finding the streams dry,
Choked, with no rain, in dust : the sky
Shall not be fainter this July.

"Men sickened ; beasts lay without strength,
The year died in the land.
But I, already desolate,
Said merely, sitting down to wait,—
'The seasons change and Time wears late.'

"For I had my hard secret told,
In secret, to a priest ;
With him I communed ; and he said
The world's soul, for its sins, was sped,
And the sun's courses numberèd.

"The year slid like a corpse afloat :
None trafficked,—who had bread
Did eat. That year our legions, come
Thinned from the place of war, at home
Found busier death, more burdensome.

"Tidings and rumors came with them,
The first for months. The chiefs
Sat daily at our board, and in
Their speech were names of friend and kin :
One day they spoke of Urscelyn.

"The words were light, among the rest :
Quick glance my brothers sent
To sift the speech ; and I, struck through,
Sat sick and giddy in full view :
Yet did none gaze, so many knew.

"Because in the beginning, much
Had caught abroad, through them
That heard my clamor on the coast :
But two were hanged ; and then the most
Held silence wisdom, as thou know'st.

"That year the convent yielded thee
Back to our home ; and thou
Then knew'st not how I shuddered cold
To kiss thee, seeming to enfold
To my changed heart myself of old.

"Then there was showing thee the house,
So many rooms and doors ;
Thinking the while how thou would'st start
If once I flung the doors apart
Of one dull chamber in my heart.

"And yet I longed to open it;
And often in that year
Of plague and want, when side by side
We've knelt to pray with them that died,
My prayer was, 'Show her what I hide!'"

NOTE.

THE BRIDE'S PRELUDE.—A good deal of this uncompleted poem was written at a very early date, say 1847–9. This portion may have extended up to about p. 54, "Not the guilt only made the shame," etc.; and the poem was then named *Bride-chamber Talk*. The date of the remainder is less definite to me: perhaps towards 1859–60 for the most part; and in the earlier portion considerable changes in diction, etc., were introduced about the same time. My brother had practically laid the poem aside for many years before his death, and would probably never have completed it, even in a longer term of life. I find a memorandum in his handwriting of the contemplated conclusion of the poem: written perhaps towards 1878. "Urscelyn has become celebrated as a soldier of fortune, selling his sword to the highest bidder, and in this character reports reach Aloyse and her family respecting him. Aloyse now becomes enamoured of a young knight who loves her deeply; this leads, after fears and hesitations, to her confessing to him the stain on her life; he still remains devoted to her. Urscelyn now reappears; his influence as a soldier renders a lasting bond with him desirable to the brothers of Aloyse, much as they hate him; and he, on his side, is bent on assuming an important position in the family to which he as yet only half belongs. He therefore offers marriage to Aloyse, supported by the will of her brothers, who moreover are well aware of the blot they have to efface, which would thus disappear. At a tournament Urscelyn succeeds in treacherously slaying the knight to whom Aloyse has betrothed herself; and this death is followed in due course by the bridal to which the poem relates. It winds up with the description of the last preparations preceding the bridal procession. Amelotte would draw attention to the passing of the time. Aloyse then says: 'There is much now that you remember; how we heard that Urscelyn had become a sol-

SISTER HELEN.*

"Why did you melt your waxen man,
Sister Helen?
To-day is the third since you began."
"The time was long, yet the time ran,
Little brother."
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Three days to-day, between Hell and Heaven!)

"But if you have done your work aright,
Sister Helen,
You'll let me play, for you said I might."
"Be very still in your play to-night,
Little brother."
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Third night, to-night, between Hell and Heaven!)

dier of fortune, and how he returned here, etc. You must also remember well the death of that young knight at the tourney.' Amelotte should then describe the event, and say how well she remembers Urscelyn's bitter grief at the mischance. Aloyse would then tell her how she herself was betrothed secretly to the young knight, and how Urscelyn slew him intentionally. As the bridal procession appears, perhaps it might become apparent that the brothers mean to kill Urscelyn when he has married her."

* This poem was first published about 1853 in the *Düsseldorf Annual*, at the invitation of the editress, Mrs. Howitt. It had been written a couple of years or so before. It reappeared with some improvements in the volume *Poems* of 1870; and again in the partly modified re-issueof that volume in 1881. The stanzas regarding the bride of Keith of Ewern are additions proper to this ultimate form of the poem.

"You said it must melt ere vesper-bell,
Sister Helen;
If now it be molten, all is well."
"Even so,—nay, peace! you cannot tell,
Little brother."
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
O what is this, between Hell and Heaven?)

"Oh the waxen knave was plump to-day,
Sister Helen;
How like dead folk he has dropped away!"
"Nay now, of the dead what can you say,
Little brother?"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
What of the dead, between Hell and Heaven?)

"See, see, the sunken pile of wood,
Sister Helen,
Shines through the thinned wax red as blood!"
"Nay now, when looked you yet on blood,
Little brother?"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
How pale she is, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Now close your eyes, for they're sick and sore,
Sister Helen,
And I'll play without the gallery door."
"Aye, let me rest,—I'll lie on the floor,
Little brother."
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
What rest to-night, between Hell and Heaven?)

"Here high up in the balcony,
Sister Helen,
The moon flies face to face with me."
"Aye, look and say whatever you see,
Little brother."
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
What sight to-night, between Hell and Heaven?)

"Outside it's merry in the wind's wake,
Sister Helen;
In the shaken trees the chill stars shake."
"Hush, heard you a horse-tread as you spake,
Little brother?"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
What sound to-night, between Hell and Heaven?)

"I hear a horse-tread, and I see,
Sister Helen,
Three horsemen that ride terribly."
"Little brother, whence come the three,
Little brother?"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Whence should they come, between Hell and Heaven?)

"They come by the hill-verge from Boyne Bar,
Sister Helen,
And one draws nigh, but two are afar."
"Look, look, do you know them who they are,
Little brother?"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Who should they be, between Hell and Heaven?)

"Oh, it's Keith of Eastholm rides so fast,
Sister Helen,
For I know the white mane on the blast."
"The hour has come, has come at last,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Her hour at last, between Hell and Heaven!)

"He has made a sign and called Halloo!
Sister Helen,
And he says that he would speak with you."
"Oh tell him I fear the frozen dew,
Little brother."
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Why laughs she thus, between Hell and Heaven?)

"The wind is loud, but I hear him cry,
Sister Helen,
That Keith of Ewern's like to die."
"And he and thou, and thou and I,
Little brother."
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
And they and we, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Three days ago, on his marriage-morn,
Sister Helen,
He sickened, and lies since then forlorn."
"For bridegroom's side is the bride a thorn,
Little brother?"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Cold bridal cheer, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Three days and nights he has lain abed,
Sister Helen,
And he prays in torment to be dead."
"The thing may chance, if he have prayed,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
If he have prayed between Hell and Heaven!)

"But he has not ceased to cry to-day,
Sister Helen,
That you should take your curse away."
"*My* prayer was heard,—he need but pray
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Shall God not hear between Hell and Heaven?)

"But he says, till you take back your ban,
Sister Helen,
His soul would pass, yet never can."
"Nay then, shall I slay a living man,
Little brother?"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
A living soul, between Hell and Heaven!)

"But he calls ever on your name,
Sister Helen,
And says that he melts before a flame."
"My heart for his pleasure fared the same,
Little brother."
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Fire at the heart, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Here's Keith of Westholm riding fast,
Sister Helen,
For I know the white plume on the blast."
"The hour, the sweet hour I forecast,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Is the hour sweet, between Hell and Heaven?)

"He stops to speak, and he stills his horse,
Sister Helen;
But his words are drowned in the wind's course."
"Nay hear, nay hear, you must hear perforce,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
What word now heard, between Hell and Heaven?)

"Oh he says that Keith of Ewern's cry,
Sister Helen,
Is ever to see you ere he die."
"In all that his soul sees, there am I,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
The souls one sight, between Hell and Heaven!)

"He sends a ring and a broken coin,
Sister Helen,
And bids you mind the banks of Boyne."
"What else he broke will he ever join,
Little brother?"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
No, never joined, between Hell and Heaven!)

"He yields you these and craves full fain,
Sister Helen,
You pardon him in his mortal pain."
"What else he took will he give again,
Little brother?"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Not twice to give, between Hell and Heaven!)

"He calls your name in an agony,
Sister Helen,
That even dead Love must weep to see."
"Hate, born of Love is blind as he,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Love turned to hate, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Oh it's Keith of Keith now that rides fast,
Sister Helen,
For I know the white hair on the blast."
"The short short hour will soon be past."
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Will Soon be past between Hell and Heaven!)

"He looks at me and he tries to speak,
Sister Helen,
But oh! his voice is sad and weak!"
"What here should the mighty Baron seek,
Little brother?"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother*
Is this the end, between Hell and Heaven?)

"Oh his son still cries, if you forgive,
Sister Helen,
The body dies but the soul shall live."
"Fire shall forgive me as I forgive,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
As she forgives, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Oh he prays you, as his heart would rive,
Sister Helen,
To save his dear son's soul alive."
"Fire cannot slay it, it shall thrive,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Alas, alas, between Hell and Heaven!)

"He cries to you, kneeling in the road,
Sister Helen,
To go with him for the love of God!"
"The way is long to his son's abode,
Little brother."
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
The way is long, between Hell and Heaven!)

"A lady's here, by a dark steed brought,
Sister Helen,
So darkly clad, I saw her not."
"See her now or never see aught,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
What more to see, between Hell and Heaven?)

"Her hood falls back, and the moon shines fair,
Sister Helen,
On the Lady of Ewern's golden hair."
"Blest hour of my power and her despair,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Hour blest and bann'd, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Pale, pale her cheeks, that in pride did glow,
Sister Helen,
'Neath the bridal-wreath three days ago."
"One morn for pride and three days for woe,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Three days, three nights, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Her clasped hands stretch from her bending head,
Sister Helen;
With the loud wind's wail her sobs are wed."
"What wedding-strains hath her bridal-bed,
Little brother?"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
What strain but death's, between Hell and Heaven!)

"She may not speak, she sinks in a swoon,
Sister Helen,—
She lifts her lips and gasps on the moon."
"Oh! might I but hear her soul's blithe tune,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Her woe's dumb cry, between Hell and Heaven!)

"They've caught her to Westholm's saddle-bow,
Sister Helen,
And her moonlit hair gleams white in its flow."
"Let it turn whiter than winter snow,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*)
Woe-withered gold, between Hell and Heaven!)

"O Sister Helen, you heard the bell,
Sister Helen!
More loud than the vesper-chime it fell."
"No vesper-chime, but a dying knell,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
His dying knell, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Alas! but I fear the heavy sound,
Sister Helen;
Is it in the sky or in the ground?"
"Say, have they turned their horses round,
Little brother?"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
What would she more, between Hell and Heaven?)

They have raised the old man from his knee,
Sister Helen,
And they ride in silence hastily."
"More fast the naked soul doth flee,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
The naked soul, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Flank to flank are the three steeds gone,
Sister Helen,
But the lady's dark steed goes alone."
"And lonely her bridegroom's soul hath flown,
Little brother."
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
The lonely ghost between Hell and Heaven!)

"Oh the wind is sad in the iron chill,
Sister Helen,
And weary sad they look by the hill."
"But he and I are sadder still,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Most sad of all, between Hell and Heaven!)

"See, see, the wax has dropped from its place,
Sister Helen,
And the flames are winning up apace!"
"Yet here they burn but for a space,
Little brother!
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Here for a space, between Hell and Heaven!)

"Ah! what white thing at the door has cross'd,
Sister Helen?
At! what is this that sighs in the frost?"
"A soul that's lost as mine is lost,
Little brother!"
(*O Mother, Mary Mother,*
Lost, lost, all lost, between Hell and Heaven!)

THE STAFF AND SCRIP.*

"Who rules these lands?" the Pilgrim said.
"Stranger, Queen Blanchelys."
"And who has thus harried them?" he said.
"It was Duke Luke did this:
God's ban be his!"

The Pilgrim said: "Where is your house?
I'll rest there, with your will."
"You've but to climb these blackened boughs
And you'll see it over the hill,
For it burns still."

"Which road, to seek your Queen?" said he,
"Nay, nay, but with some wound
You'll fly back hither, it may be,
And by your blood i' the ground
My place be found."

"Friend, stay in peace. God keep your head,
And mine, where I will go:
For He is here and there," he said.
He passed the hill-side, slow,
And stood below.

* My brother found the story of this poem in the *Gesta Romanorum*, and schemed out the poem in September 1849. Its actual composition seems to me to have been somewhat later, perhaps towards 1853.

The Queen sat idle by her loom :
  She heard the arras stir,
And looked up sadly : through the room
  The sweetness sickened her
    Of musk and myrrh.

Her women, standing two and two,
  In silence combed the fleece.
The Pilgrim said, " Peace be with you,
  Lady ; " and bent his knees.
    She answered, " Peace."

Her eyes were like the wave within ;
  Like water-reeds the poise
Of her soft body, dainty thin ;
  And like the water's noise
    Her plaintive voice.

For him, the stream had never well'd
  In desert tracts, malign
So sweet ; nor had he ever felt
  So faint in the sunshine
    Of Palestine.

Right so, he knew that he saw weep
  Each night through every dream
The Queen's own face, confused in sleep
  With visages supreme
    Not known to him.

" Lady," he said, " your lands lie burnt
  And waste : to meet your foe
All fear : this I have seen and learnt.
  Say that it shall be so,
    And I will go."

She gazed at him. "Your cause is just,
For I have heard the same,"
He said: "God's strength shall be my trust,
Fall it to good or grame,
'Tis in His name."

"Sir, you are thanked. My cause is dead.
Why should you toil to break
A grave, and fall therein?" she said.
He did not pause but spake:
"For my vow's sake."

"Can such vows be, Sir—to God's ear,
Not to God's will?" "My vow
Remains: God heard me there as here,"
He said with reverent brow,
"Both then and now."

They gazed together, he and she,
The minute while he spoke;
And when he ceased, she suddenly
Looked round upon her folk
As though she woke.

"Fight, Sir," she said; "my prayers in pain
Shall be your fellowship."
He whispered one among her train,—
"To-morrow bid her keep
This staff and scrip."

She sent him a sharp sword, whose belt
About his body there
As sweet as her own arms he felt.
He kissed its blade, all bare,
Instead of her.

She sent him a green banner wrought
With one white lily stem,
To bind his lance with when he fought.
He writ upon the same
And kissed her name.

She sent him a white shield, whereon
She bade that he should trace
His will. He blent fair hues that shone,
And in a golden space
He kissed her face.

Born of the day that died, that eve
Now dying sank to rest;
As he, in likewise taking leave,
Once with a heaving breast
Looked to the west.

And there the sunset skies unseal'd,
Like lands he never knew,
Beyond to-morrow's battle-field
Lay open out of view
To ride into.

Next day till dark the women pray'd:
Nor any might know there
How the fight went: the Queen has bade
That there do come to her
No messenger.

The Queen is pale, her maidens ail;
And to the organ-tones
They sing but faintly, who sang well
The matin-orisons,
The lauds and nones.

Lo, Father, is thine ear inclin'd,
And hath thine angel pass'd ?
For these thy watchers now are blind
With vigil, and at last
Dizzy with fast.

Weak now to them the voice o' the priest
As any trance affords ;
And when each anthem failed and ceas'd,
It seemed that the last chords
Still sang the words.

" Oh what is the light that shines so red ?
'Tis long since the sun set ;"
Quoth the youngest to the eldest maid :
" 'Twas dim but now, and yet
The light is great."

Quoth the other : " 'Tis our sight is dazed
That we see flame i' the air."
But the Queen held her brows and gazed,
And said, " It is the glare
Of torches there."

" Oh what are the sounds that rise and spread ?
All day it was so still ; "
Quoth the youngest to the eldest maid :
" Unto the furthest hill
The air they fill."

Quoth the other : " 'Tis our sense is blurr'd
With all the chants gone by."
But the Queen held her breath and heard,
And said, " It is the cry
Of Victory."

The first of all the rout was sound,
  The next were dust and flame,
And then the horses shook the ground:
  And in the thick of them
    A still band came.

"Oh what do ye bring out of the fight,
  Thus hid beneath these boughs?"
"Thy conquering guest returns to-night,
  And yet shall not carouse,
    Queen, in thy house."

"Uncover ye his face," she said.
  "O changed in little space!"
She cried, "O pale that was so red!
  O God, O God of grace!
    Cover his face."

His sword was broken in his hand
  Where he had kissed the blade.
"O soft steel that could not withstand!
  O my hard heart unstayed,
    That prayed and prayed!"

His bloodied banner crossed his mouth
  Where he had kissed her name.
"O east, and west, and north, and south,
  Fair flew my web, for shame,
    To guide Death's aim!"

The tints were shredded from his shield
  Where he had kissed her face.
"Oh, of all gifts that I could yield,
  Death only keeps its place,
    My gift and grace!"

Then stepped a damsel to his side,
And spoke, and needs must weep :
"For his sake, lady, if he died,
He prayed of thee to keep
This staff and scrip."

That night they hung above her bed,
Till morning wet with tears.
Year after year above her head
Her bed his token wears,
Five years, ten years.

That night the passion of her grief
Shook them as there they hung.
Each year the wind that shed the leaf
Shook them and in its tongue
A message flung.

And once she woke with a clear mind
That letters writ to calm
Her soul lay in the scrip ; to find
Only a torpid balm
And dust of palm.

They shook far off with palace sport
When joust and dance were rife ;
And the hunt shook them from the court ;
For hers, in peace or strife,
Was a Queen's life.

A Queen's death now : as now they shake
To gusts in chapel dim,—
Hung where she sleeps, not seen to wake,
(Carved lovely white and slim),
With them by him.

Stand up to-day, still armed, with her,
Good knight, before His brow
Who then as now was here and there,
Who had in mind thy vow
Then even as now.

The lists are set in Heaven to-day,
The bright pavilions shine ;
Fair hangs thy shield, and none gainsay
The trumpets sound in sign
That she is thine.

Not tithed with days' and years' decease
He pays thy wage He owed,
But with imperishable peace
Here in His own abode,
Thy jealous God.

JENNY.

Vengeance of Jenny's case! Fie on her! Never name her, child!—(*Mrs. Quickly.*—)

Lazy laughing languid Jenny,
Fond of a kiss and fond of a guinea,
Whose head upon my knee to-night
Rests for a while, as if grown light
With all our dances and the sound
To which the wild tunes spun you round:
Fair Jenny mine, the thoughtless queen
Of kisses which the blush between
Could hardly make much daintier ;
Whose eyes are as blue skies, whose hair

Is countless gold incomparable:
Fresh flower, scarce touched with signs that tell
Of Love's exuberant hotbed:—Nay,
Poor flower left torn since yesterday
Until to-morrow leave you bare;
Poor handful of bright spring-water
Flung in the whirlpool's shrieking face;
Poor shameful Jenny, full of grace
Thus with your head upon my knee;—
Whose person or whose purse may be
The lodestar of your reverie?

This room of yours, my Jenny, looks
A change from mine so full of books,
Whose serried ranks hold fast, forsooth,
So many captive hours of youth,—
The hours they thieve from day and night
To make one's cherished work come right,
And leave it wrong for all their theft,
Even as to-night my work was left:
Until I vowed that since my brain
And eyes of dancing seemed so fain,
My feet should have some dancing too:—
And thus it was I met with you.
Well, I suppose 'twas hard to part,
For here I am. And now, sweetheart,
You seem too tired to get to bed.

It was a careless life I led
When rooms like this were scarce so strange
Not long ago. What breeds the change,—
The many aims or the few years?
Because to-night it all appears
Something I do not know again.

The cloud's not danced out of my brain,—
The cloud that made it turn and swim
While hour by hour the books grew dim.
Why, Jenny, as I watch you there,—
For all your wealth of loosened hair,
Your silk ungirdled and unlac'd
And warm sweets open to the waist,
All golden in the lamplight's gleam,—
You know not what a book you seem,
Half-read by lightning in a dream!
How should you know, my Jenny? Nay,
And I should be ashamed to say:—
Poor beauty, so well worth a kiss!
But while my thought runs on like this
With wasteful whims more than enough,
I wonder what you're thinking of.

If of myself you think at all,
What is the thought?—conjectural
On sorry matters best unsolved?—
Or inly is each grace revolved
To fit me with a lure?—or (sad
To think!) perhaps you're merely glad
That I'm not drunk or ruffianly
And let you rest upon my knee.

For sometimes, were the truth confess'd,
You're thankful for a little rest,—
Glad from the crush to rest within,
From the heart-sickness and the din
Where envy's voice at virtue's pitch
Mocks you because your gown is rich;
And from the pale girl's dumb rebuke,
Whose ill-clad grace and toil-worn look

Proclaim the strength that keeps her weak,
And other nights than yours bespeak ;
And from the wise unchildish elf,
To schoolmate lesser than himself
Pointing you out, what thing you are :—
Yes, from the daily jeer and jar,
From shame and shame's outbraving too,
Is rest not sometimes sweet to you ?—
But most from the hatefulness of man,
Who spares not to end what he began,
Whose acts are ill and his speech ill,
Who, having used you at his will,
Thrusts you aside, as when I dine
I serve the dishes and the wine.

Well, handsome Jenny mine, sit up :
I've filled our glasses, let us sup,
And do not let me think of you,
Lest shame of yours suffice for two.
What, still so tired ? Well, well then, keep
Your head there, so you do not sleep ;
But that the weariness may pass
And leave you merry, take this glass.
Ah ! lazy lily hand, more bless'd
If ne'er in rings it had been dress'd
Nor ever by a glove conceal'd !

Behold the lilies of the field,
They toil not neither do they spin ;
(So doth the ancient text begin,—
Not of such rest as one of these
Can share.) Another rest and ease
Along each summer-sated path
From its new lord the garden hath,

Than that whose spring in blessings ran
Which praised the bounteous husbandman,
Ere yet, in days of hankering breath,
The lilies sickened unto death.

What, Jenny, are your lilies dead ?
Aye, and the snow-white leaves are spread
Like winter on the garden-bed.
But you had roses left in May,—
They were not gone too. Jenny, nay,
But must your roses die, and those
Their purfled buds that should unclose ?
Even so ; the leaves are curled apart,
Still red as from the broken heart,
And here's the naked stem of thorns.

Nay, nay, mere words. Here nothing warns
As yet of winter. Sickness here
Or want alone could waken fear,—
Nothing but passion wrings a tear.
Except when there may rise unsought
Haply at times a passing thought
Of the old days which seem to be
Much older than any history
That is written in any book ;
When she would lie in fields and look
Along the ground through the blown grass,
And wonder where the city was,
Far out of sight, whose broil and bale
They told her then for a child's tale.

Jenny, you know the city now.
A child can tell the tale there, how

Some things which are not yet enroll'd
In market-lists are bought and sold
Even till the early Sunday light,
When Saturday night is market-night
Everywhere, be it dry or wet,
And market-night in the Haymarket.
Our learned London children know,
Poor Jenny, all your pride and woe;
Have seen your lifted silken skirt
Advertise dainties through the dirt;
Have seen your coach-wheels splash rebuke
On virtue; and have learned your look
When, wealth and health slipped past, you stare
Along the streets alone, and there,
Round the long park, across the bridge,
The cold lamps at the pavement's edge
Wind on together and apart,
A fiery serpent for your heart.

Let the thoughts pass, an empty cloud!
Suppose I were to think aloud,—
What if to her all this were said?
Why, as a volume seldom read
Being opened halfway shuts again,
So might the pages of her brain
Be parted at such words, and thence
Close back upon the dusty sense.
For is there hue or shape defin'd
In Jenny's desecrated mind,
Where all contagious currents meet,
A Lethe of the middle street?
Nay, it reflects not any face,
Nor sound is in its sluggish pace,
But as they coil those eddies clot,
And night and day remember not.

Why, Jenny, you're asleep at last!—
Asleep, poor Jenny, hard and fast.—
So young and soft and tired; so fair,
With chin thus nestled in your hair,
Mouth quiet, eyelids almost blue
As if some sky of dreams shone through!

Just as another woman sleeps!
Enough to throw one's thoughts in heaps
Of doubt and horror,—what to say
Or think,—this awful secret sway,
The potter's power over the clay!
Of the same lump (it has been said)
For honor and dishonor made,
Two sister vessels. Here is one.

My cousin Nell is fond of fun,
And fond of dress, and change, and praise,
So mere a woman in her ways:
And if her sweet eyes rich in youth
Are like her lips that tell the truth,
My cousin Nell is fond of love,
And she's the girl I'm proudest of,
Who does not prize her, guard her well?
The love of change, in cousin Nell,
Shall find the best and hold it dear:
The unconquered mirth turn quieter
Not through her own, through others' woe:
The conscious pride of beauty glow
Beside another's pride in her,
One little part of all they share.
For Love himself shall ripen these
In a kind soil to just increase
Through years of fertilizing peace.

Of the same lump (as it is said)
For honor and dishonor made,
Two sister vessels. Here is one.

It makes a goblin of the sun.

So pure,—so fall'n ! How dare to think
Of the first common kindred link ?
Yet, Jenny, till the world shall burn
It seems that all things take their turn ;
And who shall say but this fair tree
May need, in changes that may be,
Your children's children's charity ?
Scorned then, no doubt, as you are scorn'd !
Shall no man hold his pride forewarn'd
Till in the end, the Day of Days,
At Judgment, one of his own race,
As frail and lost as you, shall rise,—
His daughter, with his mother's eyes ?

How Jenny's clock ticks on the shelf !
Might not the dial scorn itself
That has such hours to register ?
Yet as to me, even so to her
Are golden sun and silver moon,
In daily largesse of earth's boon,
Counted for life-coins to one tune.
And if, as blindfold fates are toss'd,
Through some one man this life be lost,
Shall soul not somehow pay for soul ?

Fair shines the gilded aureole
In which our highest painters place
Some living woman's simple face.
And the stilled features thus descried
As Jenny's long throat droops aside,—

The shadows where the cheeks are thin,
And pure wide curve from ear to chin,—
With Raffael's, Leonardo's hand
To show them to men's souls, might stand,
Whole ages long, the whole world through,
For preachings of what God can do.
What has man done here? How atone,
Great God, for this which man has done?
And for the body and soul which by
Man's pitiless doom must now comply
With lifelong hell, what lullaby
Of sweet forgetful second birth
Remains? All dark. No sign on earth
What measure of God's rest endows
The many mansions of his house.

If but a woman's heart might see
Such erring heart unerringly
For once! But that can never be.

Like a rose shut in a book
In which pure women may not look,
For its base pages claim control
To crush the flower within the soul;
Where through each dead rose-leaf that clings,
Pale as transparent Psyche-wings,
To the vile text, are traced such things
As might make lady's cheek indeed
More than a living rose to read;
So nought save foolish foulness may
Watch with hard eyes the sure decay;
And so the life-blood of this rose,
Puddled with shameful knowledge, flows
Through leaves no chaste hand may unclose:

Yet still it keeps such faded show
Of when 'twas gathered long ago,
That the crushed petals' lovely grain,
The sweetness of the sanguine stain,
Seen of a woman's eyes, must make
Her pitiful heart, so prone to ache,
Love roses better for its sake :—
Only that this can never be :—
Even so unto her sex is she.

Yet, Jenny, looking long at you,
The woman almost fades from view.
A cipher of man's changeless sum
Of lust, past, present, and to come,
Is left. A riddle that one shrinks
To challenge from the scornful sphinx.

Like a toad within a stone
Seated while Time crumbles on ;
Which sits there since the earth was curs'd
For Man's transgression at the first ;
Which, living through all centuries,
Not once has seen the sun arise ;
Whose life, to its cold circle charmed,
The earth's whole summers have not warmed ;
Which always—whitherso the stone
Be flung—sits there, deaf, blind, alone ;—
Aye, and shall not be driven out
Till that which shuts him round about
Break at the very Master's stroke,
And the dust thereof vanish as smoke,
And the seed of Man vanish as dust :—
Even so within this world is Lust.

Come, come, what use in thoughts like this ?
Poor little Jenny, good to kiss,—
You'd not believe by what strange roads
Thought travels, when your beauty goads
A man to-night to think of toads !
Jenny, wake up . . . . Why, there's the dawn !

And there's an early wagon drawn
To market, and some sheep that jog
Bleating before a barking dog ;
And the old streets come peering through
Another night that London knew ;
And all as ghostlike as the lamps.

So on the wings of day decamps
My last night's frolic. Glooms begin
To shiver off as lights creep in
Past the gauze curtains half drawn-to,
And the lamp's doubled shade grows blue,—
Your lamp, my Jenny, kept alight,
Like a wise virgin's, all one night !
And in the alcove coolly spread
Glimmers with dawn your empty bed ;
And yonder your fair face I see
Reflected lying on my knee,
Where teems with first foreshadowings
Your pier-glass scrawled with diamond rings :
And on your bosom all night worn
Yesterday's rose now droops forlorn,
But dies not yet this summer morn.

And now without, as if some word
Had called upon them that they heard,

The London sparrows far and nigh
Clamor together suddenly ;
And Jenny's cage-bird grown awake
Here in their song his part must take,
Because here too the day doth break.

And somehow in myself the dawn
Among stirred clouds and veils withdrawn
Strikes grayly on her. Let her sleep.
But will it wake her if I heap
These cushions thus beneath her head
Where my knee was ? No,—there's your bed,
My Jenny, while you dream. And there
I lay among your golden hair
Perhaps the subject of your dreams,
These golden coins.

For still one deems
That Jenny's flattering sleep confers
New magic on the magic purse,—
Grim web, how clogged with shrivelled flies !
Between the threads fine fumes arise
And shape their pictures in the brain.
There roll no streets in glare and rain,
Nor flagrant man-swine whets his tusk ;
But delicately sighs in musk
The homage of the dim boudoir ;
Or like a palpitating star
Thrilled into song, the opera-night
Breathes faint in the quick pulse of light ;
Or at the carriage-window shine
Rich wares for choice ; or, free to dine,
Whirls through its hour of health (divine
For her) the concourse of the Park.
And though in the discounted dark

Her function there and here are one,
Beneath the lamps and in the sun
There reigns at least the acknowledged belle
Apparelled beyond parallel.
Ah Jenny, yes, we know your dreams.

For even the Paphian Venus seems
A goddess o'er the realms of love,
When silver-shrined in shadowy grove:
Aye, or let offerings nicely plac'd
But hide Priapus to the waist,
And whoso looks on him shall see
An eligible deity.

Why, Jenny, waking here alone
May help you to remember one,
Though all the memory's long outworn
Of many a double-pillowed morn.
I think I see you when you wake,
And rub your eyes for me, and shake
My gold, in rising, from your hair,
A Danaë for a moment there.

Jenny, my love rang true! for still
Love at first sight is vague, until
That tinkling makes him audible.

And must I mock you to the last,
Ashamed of my own shame,—aghast
Because some thoughts not born amiss
Rose at a poor fair face like this?
Well, of such thoughts so much I know:
In my life, as in hers, they show,
By a far gleam which I may near,
A dark path I can strive to clear.

Only one kiss. Good-bye, my dear.

THE STREAM'S SECRET.

What thing unto mine ear
Wouldst thou convey,—what secret thing,
O wandering water ever whispering?
Surely thy speech shall be of her.
Thou water, O thou whispering wanderer,
What message dost thou bring?

Say, hath not Love leaned low
This hour beside thy far well-head,
And there through jealous hollowed fingers said
The thing that most I long to know,—
Murmuring with curls all dabbled in thy flow
And washed lips rosy red?

He told it to thee there
Where thy voice hath a louder tone;
But where it welters to this little moan
His will decrees that I should hear.
Now speak: for with the silence is no fear,
And I am all alone.

Shall Time not still endow
One hour with life, and I and she
Slake in one kiss the thirst of memory?
Say, stream; lest Love should disavow
Thy service, and the bird upon the bough
Sing first to tell it me.

What whisperest thou ? Nay, why
Name the dead hours ? I mind them well :
Their ghosts in many darkened doorways dwell
With desolate eyes to know them by.
The hour that must be born ere it can die,—
Of that I'd have thee tell.

But hear, before thou speak !
Withhold, I pray, the vain behest
That while the maze hath still its bower for quest
My burning heart should cease to seek.
Be sure that Love ordained for souls more meek
His roadside dells of rest.

Stream, when this silver thread
In flood-time is a torrent brown
May any bulwark bind thy foaming crown ?
Shall not the waters surge and spread
And to the crannied boulders of their bed
Still shoot the dead drift down ?

Let no rebuke find place
In speech of thine : or it shall prove
That thou dost ill expound the words of Love,
Even as thine eddy's rippling race
Would blur the perfect image of his face.
I will have none thereof.

O learn and understand
That 'gainst the wrongs himself did wreak
Love sought her aid ; until her shadowy cheek
And eyes beseeching gave command ;
And compassed in her close compassionate hand
My heart must burn and speak.

For then at last we spoke
What eyes so oft had told to eyes
Through that long-lingering silence whose half-sighs
Alone the buried secret broke,
Which with snatched hands and lips' reverberate stroke
Then from the heart did rise.

But she is far away
Now; nor the hours of night grown hoar
Bring yet to me, long gazing from the door,
The wind-stirred robe of roseate gray
And rose-crown of the hour that leads the day
When we shall meet once more.

Dark as thy blinded wave
When brimming midnight floods the glen,—
Bright as the laughter of thy runnels when
The dawn yields all the light they crave;
Even so these hours to wound and that to save
Are sisters in Love's ken.

Oh sweet her bending grace
Then when I kreel beside her feet;
And sweet her eyes' o'erhanging heaven; and sweet
The gathering folds of her embrace;
And her fall'n hair at last shed round my face
When breaths and tears shall meet.

Beneath her sheltering hair,
In the warm silence near her breast,
Our kisses and our sobs shall sink to rest;
As in some still trance made aware
That day and night have wrought to fulness there
And Love has built our nest.

And as in the dim grove,
When the rains cease that hushed them long,
'Mid glistening boughs the song-birds wake to song,—
So from our hearts deep-shrined in love,
While the leaves throb beneath, around, above,
The quivering notes shall throng.

Till tenderest words found vain
Draw back to wonder mute and deep,
And closed lips in closed arms a silence keep,
Subdued by memory's circling strain,—
The wind-rapt sound that the wind brings again
While all the willows weep.

Then by her summoning art
Shall memory conjure back the sere
Autumnal Springs, from many a dying year
Born dead; and, bitter to the heart,
The very ways where now we walk apart
Who then shall cling so near.

Aand with each thought new-grown,
Some sweet caress or some sweet name
Low-breathed shall let me know her thought the same;
Making me rich with every tone
And touch of the dear heaven so long unknown
That filled my dreams with flame.

Pity and love shall burn
In her pressed cheek and cherishing hands;
And from the living spirit of love that stands
Between her lips to soothe and yearn,
Each separate breath shall clasp me round in turn
And loose my spirit's bands.

Oh passing sweet and dear,
Then when the worshiped form and face
Are felt at length in darkling close embrace ;
Round which so oft the sun shone clear,
With mocking light and pitiless atmosphere,
In many an hour and place.

Ah me ! with what proud growth
Shall that hour's thirsting race be run ;
While, for each several sweetness still begun
Afresh, endures love's endless drouth :
Sweet hands, sweet hair, sweet cheeks, sweet eyes, sweet mouth,
Each singly wooed and won.

Yet most with the sweet soul
Shall love's espousals then be knit ;
For very passion of peace shall breathe from it
O'er tremulous wings that touch the goal,
As on the unmeasured height of Love's control
The lustral fires are lit.

Therefore, when breast and cheek
Now part, from long embraces free,—
Each on the other gazing shall but see
A self that has no need to speak :
All things unsought, yet nothing more to seek,—
One love in unity.

O water wandering past,—
Albeit to thee I speak this thing,
O water, thou that wanderest whispering,
Thou keep'st thy counsel to the last.
What spell upon thy bosom should Love cast,
His message thence to wring ?

Nay, must thou hear the tale
Of the past days,—the heavy debt
Of life that obdurate time withholds,—ere yet
To win thine ear these prayers prevail,
And by thy voice Love's self with high All-hail
Yield up the love-secret ?

How should all this be told ?—
All the sad sum of wayworn days ;—
Heart's anguish in the impenetrable maze ;
And on the waste uncolored wold
The visible burthen of the sun grown cold
And the moon's laboring gaze ?

Alas ! shall hope be nurs'd
On life's all-succoring breast in vain,
And made so perfect only to be slain ?
Or shall not rather the sweet thirst
Even yet rejoice the heart with warmth dispers'd
And strength grown fair again ?

Stands it not by the door—
Love's Hour—till she and I shall meet ;
With bodiless form and unapparent feet
That cast no shadow yet before,
Though round its head the dawn begins to pour
The breath that makes day sweet ?

Its eyes invisible
Watch till the dial's thin-thrown shade
Be born,—yea, till the journeying line be laid
Upon the point that wakes the spell,
And there in lovelier light than tongue can tell
Its presence stand array'd.

Its soul remembers yet
Those sunless hours that passed it by ;
And still it hears the night's disconsolate cry,
And feels the branches wringing wet
Cast on its brow, that may not once forget,
Dumb tears from the blind sky.

But oh ! when now her foot
Draws near, for whose sake night and day
Were long in weary longing sighed away,—
The Hour of Love, 'mid airs grown mute,
Shall sing beside the door, and Love's own lute
Thrill to the passionate lay.

Thou know'st, for Love has told
Within thine ear, O stream, how soon
That song shall lift its sweet appointed tune
O tell me, for my lips are cold,
And in my veins the blood is waxing old
Even while I beg the boon.

So, in that hour of sighs
Assuaged, shall we beside this stone
Yield thanks for grace ; while in thy mirror shown
The twofold image softly lies,
Until we kiss, and each in other's eyes
Is imaged all alone.

Still silent ? Can no art
Of Love's then move thy pity ? Nay,
To thee let nothing come that owns his sway :
Let happy lovers have no part
With thee ; nor even so sad and poor a heart
As thou hast spurned to-day.

To-day? Lo! night is here.
The glen grows heavy with some veil
Risen from the earth or fall'n to make earth pale;
And all stands hushed to eye and ear,
Until the night-wind shake the shade like fear
And every covert quail.

Ah! by a colder wave
On deathlier airs the hour must come
Which to thy heart, my love, shall call me home.
Between the lips of the low cave
Against that night the lapping waters lave,
And the dark lips are dumb.

But there Love's self doth stand,
And with Life's weary wings far flown,
And with Death's eyes that make the water moan,
Gathers the water in his hand:
And they that drink know nought of sky or land
But only love alone.

O soul-sequestered face
Far off,—O were that night but now!
So even beside that stream even I and thou
Through thirsting lips should draw Love's grace,
And in the zone of that supreme embrace
Bind aching breast and brow.

O water whispering
Still through the dark into mine ears,—
As with mine eyes, is it not now with hers?—
Mine eyes that add to thy cold spring,
Wan water, wandering water weltering,
This hidden tide of tears.

ROSE MARY.*

Of her two fights with the Beryl-stone:
Lost the first, but the second won.

PART I.

"MARY mine that art Mary's Rose,
Come in to me from the garden-close.
The sun sinks fast with the rising dew,
And we marked not how the faint moon grew;
But the hidden stars are calling you.

"Tall Rose Mary, come to my side,
And read the stars if you'd be a bride.
In hours whose need was not your own,
While you were a young maid yet ungrown,
You've read the stars in the Beryl-stone.

"Daughter, once more I bid you read;
But now let it be for your own need:
Because to-morrow, at break of day,
To Holy Cross he rides on his way,
Your knight Sir James of Heronhaye.

* This poem was written in the early autumn of 1871. The *Beryl-songs* are a later addition, say 1879. The very general opinion has been that they were better away, and I cannot but agree with it. I have heard my brother say that he wrote them to show that he was not incapable of the daring rhyming and rhythmical exploits of some other poets. As to this point readers must judge. It is at any rate true that in making the word "Beryl" the pivot of his experiment, a word to which there are the fewest possible rhymes, my brother weighted himself heavily.

"Ere he wed you, flower of mine,
For a heavy shrift he seeks the shrine.
Now hark to my words and do not fear;
Ill news next I have for your ear;
But be you strong, and our help is here.

"On his road, as the rumor's rife,
An ambush waits to take his life.
He needs will go, and will go alone;
Where the peril lurks may not be known;
But in this glass all things are shown."

Pale Rose Mary sank to the floor:—
"The night will come if the day is o'er!"
"Nay, heaven takes counsel, star with star,
And help shall reach your heart from afar:
A bride you'll be, as a maid you are."

The lady unbound her jewelled zone
And drew from her robe the Beryl-stone.
Shaped it was to a shadowy sphere,—
World of our world, the sun's compeer,
That bears and buries the toiling year.

With shuddering light 'twas stirred and strewn
Like the cloud-nest of the wading moon:
Freaked it was as the bubble's ball,
Rainbow-hued through a misty pall
Like the middle light of the waterfall.

Shadows dwelt in its teeming girth
Of the known and unknown things of earth;
The cloud above and the wave around,—
The central fire at the sphere's heart bound,
Like doomsday prisoned underground.

A thousand years it lay in the sea
With a treasure wrecked from Thessaly;
Deep it lay 'mid the coiled sea-wrack,
But the ocean-spirits found the track:
A soul was lost to win it back.

The lady upheld the wondrous thing:—
"Ill fare" (she said) "with a fiend's-fairing:
But Moslem blood poured forth like wine
Can hallow Hell, 'neath the Sacred Sign;
And my lord brought this from Palestine.

"Spirits who fear the Blessed Rood
Drove forth the accursed multitude
That heathen worship housed herein,—
Never again such home to win,
Save only by a Christian's sin.

"All last night at an altar fair
I burnt strange fires and strove with prayer;
Till the flame paled to the red sunrise,
All rites I then did solemnize;
And the spell lacks nothing but your eyes."

Low spake maiden Rose Mary:—
"O mother mine, if I should not see!"
"Nay, daughter, cover your face no more,
But bend love's heart to the hidden lore,
And you shall see now as heretofore."

Paler yet were the pale cheeks grown
As the gray eyes sought the Beryl-stone:
Then over her mother's lap leaned she,
And stretched her thrilled throat passionately,
And sighed from her soul, and said, "I see."

Even as she spoke, they two were 'ware
Of music-notes that fell through the air;
A chiming shower of strange device,
Drop echoing drop, once twice and thrice,
As rain may fall in Paradise.

An instant come, in an instant gone,
No time there was to think thereon.
The mother held the sphere on her knee :—
"Lean this way and speak low to me,
And take no note but of what you see."

"I see a man with a besom gray
That sweeps the flying dust away."
"Ay, that comes first in the mystic sphere;
But now that the way is swept and clear,
Heed well what next you look on there."

"Stretched aloft and adown I see
Two roads that part in waste-country :
The glen lies deep and the ridge stands tall;
What's great below is above seen small,
And the hill-side is the valley-wall."

"Stream-bank, daughter, or moor and moss,
Both roads will take to Holy Cross.
The hills are a weary waste to wage;
But what of the valley-road's presage?
That way must tend his pilgrimage."

"As 'twere the turning leaves of a book,
The road runs past me as I look;
Or it is even as though mine eye
Should watch calm waters filled with sky
While lights and clouds and wings went by."

"In every covert seek a spear;
They'll scarce lie close till he draws near."
"The stream has spread to a river now;
The stiff blue sedge is deep in the slough,
But the banks are bare of shrub or bough."

"Is there any roof that near at hand
Might shelter yield to a hidden band?"
"On the further bank I see but one,
And a herdsman now in the sinking sun
Unyokes his team at the threshold-stone."

"Keep heedful watch by the water's edge,—
Some boat might lurk 'neath the shadowed sedge."
"One slid but now 'twixt the winding shores,
But a peasant woman bent to the oars
And only a young child steered its course.

"Mother, something flashed to my sight!—
Nay, it is but the lapwing's flight.—
What glints there like a lance that flees?—
Nay, the flags are stirred in the breeze,
And the water's bright through the dart-rushes.

"Ah! vainly I search from side to side:—
Woe's me! and where do the foemen hide?
Woe's me! and perchance I pass them by,
And under the new dawn's blood-red sky
Even where I gaze the dead shall lie."

Said the mother: "For dear love's sake,
Speak more low, lest the spell should break."
Said the daughter: "By love's control,
My eyes, my words, are strained to the goal;
But oh! the voice that cries in my soul!"

"Hush, sweet, hush! be calm and behold."
"I see two floodgates broken and old:
The grasses wave o'er the ruined weir,
But the bridge still leads to the breakwater;
And—mother, mother, O mother dear!"

The damsel clung to her mother's knee,
And dared not let the shriek go free;
Low she crouched by the lady's chair,
And shrank blindfold in her fallen hair,
And whispering said, "The spears are there!"

The lady stooped aghast from her place,
And cleared the locks from her daughter's face.
"More's to see, and she swoons, alas!
Look, look again, ere the moment pass!
One shadow comes but once to the glass.

"See you there what you saw but now?"
"I see eight men 'neath the willow bough.
All over the weir a wild growth's spread:
Ah me! it will hide a living head
As well as the water hides the dead.

"They lie by the broken water-gate
As men who have a while to wait.
The chief's high lance has a blazoned scroll,—
He seems some lord of tithe and toll
With seven squires to his bannerole.

"The little pennon quakes in the air,
I cannot trace the blazon there:—
Ah! now I can see the field of blue,
The spurs and the merlins two and two;—
It is the Warden of Holycleugh!"

"God be thanked for the thing we know!
You have named your good knight's mortal foe.
Last Shrovetide in the tourney-game
He sought his life by treasonous shame;
And this way now doth he seek the same.

"So, fair lord, such a thing you are!
But we too watch till the morning star.
Well, June is kind and the moon is clear;
Saint Judas send you a merry cheer
For the night you lie at Warisweir!

"Now, sweet daughter, but one more sight,
And you may lie soft and sleep to-night.
We know in the vale what perils be:
Now look once more in the glass, and see
If over the hills the road lies free."

Rose Mary pressed to her mother's cheek,
And almost smiled but did not speak;
Then turned again to the saving spell,
With eyes to search and with lips to tell
The heart of things invisible.

"Again the shape with the besom gray
Comes back to sweep the clouds away.
Again I stand where the roads divide;
But now all's near on the steep hillside,
And a thread far down is the rivertide."

"Ay, child, your road is o'er moor and moss,
Past Holycleugh to Holy Cross.
Our hunters lurk in the valley's wake,
As they knew which way the chase would take:
Yet search the hills for your true love's sake."

"Swift and swifter the waste runs by,
And nought I see but the heath and the sky;
No brake is there that could hide a spear,
And the gaps to a horseman's sight lie clear;
Still past it goes, and there's nought to fear."

"Fear no trap that you cannot see,—
They'd not lurk yet too warily.
Below by the weir they lie in sight,
And take no heed how they pass the night
Till close they crouch with the morning light."

"The road shifts ever and brings in view
Now first the heights of Holycleugh:
Dark they stand o'er the vale below,
And hide that heaven which yet shall show
The thing their master's heart doth know.

"Where the road looks to the castle steep,
There are seven hill-clefts wide and deep:
Six mine eyes can search as they list,
But the seventh hollow is brimmed with mist:
If aught were there, it might not be wist."

"Small hope, my girl, for a helm to hide
In mists that cling to a wild moorside:
Soon they melt with the wind and sun,
And scarce would wait such deeds to be done:
God send their snares be the worst to shun."

"Still the road winds ever anew
As it hastens on towards Holycleugh;
And ever the great walls loom more near,
Till the castle-shadow, steep and sheer,
Drifts like a cloud, and the sky is clear."

"Enough, my daughter," the mother said,
And took to her breast the bending head;
"Rest, poor head, with my heart below,
While love still lulls you as long ago:
For all is learnt that we need to know.

"Long the miles and many the hours
From the castle-height to the abbey-towers;
But here the journey has no more dread;
Too thick with life is the whole road spread
For murder's trembling foot to tread."

She gazed on the Beryl-stone full fain
Ere she wrapped it close in her robe again:
The flickering shades were dusk and dun,
And the lights throbbed faint in unison,
Like a high heart when a race is run.

As the globe slid to its silken gloom,
Once more a music rained through the room;
Low it splashed like a sweet star-spray,
And sobbed like tears at the heart of May,
And died as laughter dies away.

The lady held her breath for a space,
And then she looked in her daughter's face;
But wan Rose Mary had never heard;
Deep asleep like a sheltered bird
She lay with the long spell minister'd.

"Ah! and yet I must leave you, dear,
For what you have seen your knight must hear.
Within four days, by the help of God,
He comes back safe to his heart's abode:
Be sure he shall shun the valley-road."

Rose Mary sank with a broken moan,
And lay in the chair and slept alone,
Weary, lifeless, heavy as lead:
Long it was ere she raised her head
And rose up all discomforted.

She searched her brain for a vanished thing,
And clasped her brows, remembering;
Then knelt and lifted her eyes in awe,
And sighed with a long sigh sweet to draw:—
"Thank God, thank God, thank God I saw!"

The lady had left her as she lay,
To seek the Knight of Heronhaye.
But first she clomb by a secret stair,
And knelt at a carven altar fair,
And laid the precious Beryl there.

Its girth was graved with a mystic rune
In a tongue long dead 'neath sun and moon:
A priest of the Holy Sepulchre
Read that writing and did not err;
And her lord had told its sense to her.

She breathed the words in an undertone:—
"*None sees here but the pure alone.*"
"And oh!" she said, "what rose may be
In Mary's bower more pure to see
Than my own sweet maiden Rose Mary?"

BERYL-SONG.

We whose home is the Beryl,
Fire-spirits of dread desire,
Who entered in
By a secret sin,
'Gainst whom all powers that strive with ours are sterile,—
We cry, Woe to thee, mother!
What hast thou taught her, the girl thy daughter,
That she and none other
Should this dark morrow to her deadly sorrow imperil?
What were her eyes
But the fiend's own spies,
O mother,
And shall We not fee her, our proper prophet and seër?
Go to her, mother,
Even thou, yea thou and none other,
Thou, from the Beryl:
Her fee must thou take her,
Her fee that We send, and make her,
Even in this hour, her sin's unsheltered avower.
Whose steed did neigh,
Riderless, bridleless,
At her gate before it was day?
Lo! where doth hover
The soul of her lover?
She sealed his doom, she, she was the sworn approver,—
Whose eyes were so wondrous wise,
Yet blind, ah! blind to his peril!
For stole not We in
Through a love-linked sin,
'Gainst whom all powers at war with ours are sterile.—
Fire-spirits of dread desire,
We whose home is the Beryl?

PART II.

"Pale Rose Mary, what shall be done
With a rose that Mary weeps upon?"
"Mother, let it fall from the tree,
And never walk where the strewn leaves be
Till winds have passed and the path is free."

"Sad Rose Mary, what shall be done
With a cankered flower beneath the sun?"
"Mother, let it wait for the night;
Be sure its shame shall be out of sight
Ere the moon pale or the east grow light."

"Lost Rose Mary, what shall be done
With a heart that is but a broken one?"
"Mother, let it lie where it must
The blood was drained with the bitter thrust,
And dust is all that sinks in the dust."

"Poor Rose Mary, what shall I do,—
I, your mother, that lovèd you?"
"O my mother, and is love gone?
Then seek you another love anon:
Who cares what shame shall lean upon?"

Low drooped trembling Rose Mary,
Then up as though in a dream stood she.
"Come, my heart, it is time to go;
This is the hour that has whispered low
When thy pulse quailed in the nights we know.

"Yet O my heart, thy shame has a mate
Who will not leave thee desolate.
Shame for shame, yea and sin for sin:
Yet peace at length many poor souls win
If love for love be found therein.

"O thou who seek'st our shrift to-day,"
She cried, "O James of Heronhaye—
Thy sin and mine was for love alone;
And oh! in the sight of God 'tis known
How the heart has since made heavy moan.

"Three days yet!" she said to her heart;
"But then he comes, and we will not part
God, God be thanked that I still could see!
Oh! he shall come back assuredly,
But where, alas! must he seek for me?

"O my heart, what road shall we roam
Till my wedding-music fetch me home?
For love's shut from us and bides afar,
And scorn leans over the bitter bar
And knows us now for the thing we are."

Tall she stood with a cheek flushed high
And a gaze to burn the heart-strings by.
'Twas the lightning-flash o'er sky and plain
Ere laboring thunders heave the chain
From the floodgates of the drowning rain.

The mother looked on the daughter still
As on a hurt thing that's yet to kill.
Then wildly at length the pent tears came;
The love swelled high with the swollen shame
And their hearts' tempest burst on them.

Closely locked, they clung without speech,
And the mirrored souls shook each to each,
As the cloud-moon and the water-moon
Shake face to face when the dim stars swoon
In stormy bowers of the night's mid-noon.

They swayed together, shuddering sore,
Till the mother's heart could bear no more.
'Twas death to feel her own breast shake
Even to the very throb and ache
Of the burdened heart she still must break.

All her sobs ceased suddenly,
And she sat straight up but scarce could see.
"O daughter, where should my speech begin?
Your heart held fast its secret sin:
How think you, child, that I read therein?"

"Ah me! but I thought not how it came
When your words showed that you knew my shame,
And now that you call me still your own,
I half forget you have ever known.
Did you read my heart in the Beryl-stone?"

The lady answered her mournfully:—
"The Beryl-stone has no voice for me:
But when you charged its power to show
The truth which none but the pure may know.
Did naught speak once of a coming woe?"

Her hand was close to her daughter's heart,
And it felt the life-blood's sudden start:
A quick deep breath did the damsel draw,
Like the struck fawn in the oakenshaw;
"O mother," she cried, "but still I saw!"

"O child, my child, why held you apart
From my great love your hidden heart?
Said I not that all sin must chase
From the spell's sphere the spirits of grace,
And yield their rule to the evil race?

"Ah! would to God I had clearly told
How strong those powers, accurst of old:
Their heart is the ruined house of lies;
O girl, they can seal the sinful eyes,
Or show the truth by contraries!"

The daughter sat as cold as a stone,
And spoke no word but gazed alone,
Nor moved, though her mother strove a space
To clasp her round in a close embrace,
Because she dared not see her face.

"Oh!" at last did the mother cry,
"Be sure, as he loved you, so will I!
Ah! still and dumb is the bride, I trow;
But cold and stark as the winter snow
Is the bridegroom's heart, laid dead below!

"Daughter, daughter, remember you
That cloud in the hills by Holycleugh?
'Twas a Hell-screen hiding truth away:
There, not i' the vale, the ambush lay,
And thence was the dead borne home to-day."

Deep the flood and heavy the shock
When sea meets sea in the riven rock:
But calm is the pulse that shakes the sea
To the prisoned tide of doom set free
In the breaking heart of Rose Mary.

Once she sprang as the heifer springs
With the wolf's teeth at its red heart-strings.
First 'twas fire in her breast and brain,
And then scarce hers but the whole world's pain,
As she gave one shriek and sank again.

In the hair dark-waved the face lay white
As the moon lies in the lap of night;
And as night through which no moon may dart
Lies on a pool in the woods apart,
So lay the swoon on the weary heart.

The lady felt for the bosom's stir,
And wildly kissed and called on her;
Then turned away with a quick footfall,
And slid the secret door in the wall,
And clomb the strait stair's interval.

There above in the altar-cell
A little fountain rose and fell:
She set a flask to the water's flow,
And, backward hurrying, sprinkled now
The still cold breast and the pallid brow.

Scarce cheek that warmed or breath on the air,
Yet something told that life was there.
"Ah! not with the heart the body dies!"
The lady moaned in a bitter wise;
Then wrung her hands and hid her eyes.

"Alas! and how may I meet again
In the same poor eyes the selfsame pain?
What help can I seek, such grief to guide?
Ah! one alone might avail," she cried,—
"The priest who prays at the dead man's side."

The lady arose, and sped down all
The winding stairs to the castle-hall.
Long-known valley and wood and stream,
As the loopholes passed, naught else did seem
Than the torn threads of a broken dream.

The hall was full of the castle-folk;
The women wept, but the men scarce spoke.
As the lady crossed the rush-strewn floor,
The throng fell backward, murmuring sore,
And pressed outside round the open door.

A stranger shadow hung on the hall
Than the dark pomp of a funeral.
'Mid common sights that were there alway
As 'twere a chance of the passing day,
On the ingle-bench the dead man lay.

A priest who passed by Holycleugh
The tidings brought when the day was new.
He guided them who had fetched the dead;
And since that hour, unwearièd,
He knelt in prayer at the low bier's head.

Word had gone to his own domain
That in evil wise the knight was slain:
Soon the spears must gather apace
And the hunt be hard on the hunters' trace;
But all things yet lay still for a space.

As the lady's hurried step drew near,
The kneeling priest looked up to her.
"Father, death is a grievous thing;
But oh! the woe has a sharper sting
That craves by me your ministering.

"Alas for the child that should have wed
This noble knight here lying dead!
Dead in hope, with all blessed boon
Of love thus rent from her heart ere noon,
I left her laid in a heavy swoon.

"O haste to the open bower-chamber
That's topmost as you mount the stair:
Seek her, father, ere yet she wake;
Your words, not mine, be the first to slake
This poor heart's fire, for Christ's sweet sake!

"God speed!" she said as the priest passed through,
"And I ere long will be with you."
Then low on the heart her knees sank prone;
She signed all folk from the threshold-stone;
And gazed in the dead man's face alone.

The fight for life found record yet
In the clenched lips and the teeth hard-set;
The wrath from the bent brow was not gone,
And stark in the eyes the hate still shone
Of that they last had looked upon.

The blazoned coat was rent on his breast
Where the golden field was goodliest;
But the shivered sword, close-gripped, could tell
That the blood shed round him where he fell
Was not all his in the distant dell.

The lady recked of the corpse no whit,
But saw the soul and spoke to it:
A light there was in her steadfast eyes,—
The fire of mortal tears and sighs
That pity and love immortalize.

"By thy death have I learnt to-day
Thy deed, O James of Heronhaye!
Great wrong thou hast done to me and mine;
And haply God hath wrought for a sign
By our blind deed this doom of thine.

"Thy shrift, alas! thou wast not to win;
But may death shrive thy soul herein!
Full well do I know thy love should be
Even yet—had life but stayed with thee—
Our honor's strong security."

She stooped, and said with a sob's low stir,—
"Peace be thine,—but what peace for her?"
But ere to the brow her lips were press'd,
She marked, half-hid in the riven vest,
A packet close to the dead man's breast.

'Neath surcoat pierced and broken mail
It lay on the blood-stained bosom pale.
The clot clung round it, dull and dense,
And a faintness seized her mortal sense
As she reached her hand and drew it thence.

'Twas steeped in the heart's flood welling high
From the heart it there had rested by:
'Twas glued to a broidered fragment gay,—
A shred by spear-thrust rent away
From the heron-wings of Heronhaye.

She gazed on the thing with piteous eyne:—
"Alas, poor child, some pledge of thine!
Ah me! in this troth the hearts were twain,
And one hath ebbed to this crimson stain,
And when shall the other throb again?"

She opened the packet heedfully;
The blood was stiff, and it scarce might be.
She found but a folded paper there,
And round it, twined with tenderest care,
A long bright tress of golden hair.

Even as she looked, she saw again
That dark-haired face in its swoon of pain:
It seemed a snake with a golden sheath
Crept near, as a slow flame flickereth,
And stung her daughter's heart to death.

She loosed the tress, but her hand did shake
As though indeed she had touched a snake;
And next she undid the paper's fold,
But that too trembled in her hold,
And the sense scarce grasped the tale it told.

"My heart's sweet lord," ('twas thus she read,)
"At length our love is garlanded.
At Holy Cross, within eight days' space,
I seek my shrift; and the time and place
Shall fit thee too for thy soul's good grace.

"From Holycleugh on the seventh day
My brother rides, and bides away:
And long or e'er he is back, mine own,
Afar where the face of fear's unknown
We shall be safe with our love alone.

"Ere yet at the shrine my knees I bow,
I shear one tress for our holy vow.
As round these words these threads I wind,
So, eight days hence, shall our loves be twined
Says my lord's poor lady, JOCELIND."

She read it twice, with a brain in thrall,
And then its echo told her all.
O'er brows low-fall'n her hands she drew :—
" O God ! " she said, as her hands fell too,—
" The Warden's sister of Holycleugh ! "

She rose upright with a long low moan,
And stared in the dead man's face new-known.
Had it lived indeed ? She scarce could tell :
'Twas a cloud where fiends had come to dwell,—
A mask that hung on the gate of Hell.

She lifted the lock of gleaming hair
And smote the lips and left it there.
" Here's gold that Hell shall take for thy toil !
Full well hath thy treason found its goal,
O thou dead body and damnèd soul ! "

She turned, sore dazed, for a voice was near,
And she knew that some one called to her.
On many a column fair and tall
A high court ran round the castle-hall ;
And thence it was that the priest did call.

" I sought your child where you bade me go,
And in rooms around and rooms below ;
But where, alas ! may the maiden be ?
Fear nought,—we shall find her speedily,—
But come, come hither, and seek with me."

She reached the stair like a lifelorn thing,
But hastened upward murmuring :—
" Yea, Death's is a face that's fell to see ;
But bitterer pang Life hoards for thee,
Thou broken heart of Rose Mary ! "

Beryl-Song.

We whose throne is the Beryl,
Dire-gifted spirits of fire,
Who for a twin
Leash Sorrow to Sin,
Who on no flower refrain to lour with peril,—
We cry,—O desolate daughter!
Thou and thy mother share newer shame with each other
Than last night's slaughter.
Awake and tremble, for our curses assemble!
What more, that thou know'st not yet,—
That life nor death shall forget?
No help from Heaven,—thy woes heart-riven are sterile!
O once a maiden,
With yet worse sorrow can any morrow be laden?
It waits for thee,
It looms, it must be,
O lost among women,—
It comes and thou canst not flee.
Amen to the omen,
Says the voice of the Beryl.
Thou sleep'st? Awake,—
What dar'st thou yet for his sake,
Who each for other did God's own Future imperil?
Dost dare to live
'Mid the pangs each hour must give?
Nay, rather die,—
With him thy lover 'neath Hell's cloud-cover to fly,—
Hopeless, yet not apart,
Cling heart to heart,

And beat through the nether storm-eddying winds together?
Shall this be so?
There thou shalt meet him, but mayst thou greet him? ah no!
He loves, but thee he hoped never more to see,—
He sighed as he died,
But with never a thought for thee.
Alone!
Alone, for ever alone,—
Whose eyes were such wondrous spies for the fate foreshown!
Lo! have not We leashed the twin
Of endless Sorrow to Sin,—
Who on no flower refrain to lour with peril,—
Dire-gifted spirits of fire,
We whose throne is the Beryl?

PART III.

A swoon that breaks is the whelming wave
When help comes late but still can save.
With all blind throes is the instant rife,—
Hurtling clangor and clouds at strife,—
The breath of death, but the kiss of life.

The night lay deep on Rose Mary's heart,
For her swoon was death's kind counterpart:
The dawn broke dim on Rose Mary's soul,—
No hill-crown's heavenly aureole,
But a wild gleam on a shaken shoal.

Her senses gasped in the sudden air,
And she looked around, but none was there.
She felt the slackening frost distil
Through her blood the last ooze dull and chill:
Her lids were dry and her lips were still.

Her tears had flooded her heart again;
As after a long day's bitter rain,
At dusk when the wet flower-cups shrink,
The drops run in from the beaded brink,
And all the close-shut petals drink.

Again her sighs on her heart were rolled;
As the wind that long has swept the wold,—
Whose moan was made with the moaning sea,—
Beats out its breath in the last torn tree,
And sinks at length in lethargy.

She knew she had waded bosom-deep
Along death's bank in the sedge of sleep:
All else was lost to her clouded mind;
Nor, looking back, could she see defin'd
O'er the dim dumb waste what lay behind.

Slowly fades the sun from the wall
Till day lies dead on the sun-dial:
And now in Rose Mary's lifted eye
'Twas shadow alone that made reply
To the set face of the soul's dark sky.

Yet still through her soul there wandered past
Dread phantoms borne on a wailing blast,
Death and sorrow and sin and shame;
And, murmured still, to her lips there came
Her mother's and her lover's name.

How to ask, and what thing to know?
She might not stay and she dared not go.
From fires unseen these smoke-clouds curled;
But where did the hidden curse lie furled?
And how to seek through the weary world?

With toiling breath she rose from the floor
And dragged her steps to an open door:
'Twas the secret panel standing wide,
As the lady's hand had let it bide
In hastening back to her daughter's side.

She passed, but reeled with a dizzy brain
And smote the door which closed again.
She stood within by the darkling stair,
But her feet might mount more freely there,—
'Twas the open light most blinded her.

Within her mind no wonder grew
At the secret path she never knew:
All ways alike were strange to her now,—
One field bare-ridged from the spirit's plough,
One thicket black with the cypress-bough.

Once she thought that she heard her name;
And she paused, but knew not whence it came,
Down the shadowed stair a faint ray fell
That guided the weary footsteps well
Till it led her up to the altar-cell.

No change there was on Rose Mary's face
As she leaned in the portal's narrow space:
Still she stood by the pillar's stem,
Hand and bosom and garment's hem,
As the soul stands by at the requiem.

The altar-cell was a dome low-lit,
And a veil hung in the midst of it:
At the pole-points of its circling girth
Four symbols stood of the world's first birth,—
Air and water and fire and earth.

To the north, a fountain glittered free;
To the south, there glowed a red fruit-tree;
To the east, a lamp flamed high and fair;
To the west, a crystal casket rare
Held fast a cloud of the fields of air.

The painted walls were a mystic show
Of time's ebb-tide and overflow;
His hoards long-locked and conquering key,
His service-fires that in heaven be,
And earth-wheels whirled perpetually.

Rose Mary gazed from the open door
As on idle things she cared not for,—
The fleeting shapes of an empty tale ;
Then stepped with a heedless visage pale,
And lifted aside the altar veil.

The altar stood from its curved recess
In a coiling serpent's life-likeness :
Even such a serpent evermore
Lies deep asleep at the world's dark core
Till the last Voice shake the sea and shore.

From the altar-cloth a book rose spread
And tapers burned at the altar-head,
And there in the altar-midst alone,
'Twixt wings of a sculptured beast unknown,
Rose Mary saw the Beryl-stone.

Firm it sat 'twixt the hollowed wings,
As an orb sits in the hand of kings ;
And lo ! for that Foe whose curse far-flown
Had bound her life with a burning zone,
Rose Mary knew the Beryl-stone.

Dread is the meteor's blazing sphere
When the poles throb to its blind career ;
But not with a light more grim and ghast
Thereby is the future doom forecast,
Than now this sight brought back the past.

The hours and minutes seemed to whirr
In a clanging swarm that deafened her ;
They stung her heart to a writhing flame,
And marshalled past in its glare they came,—
Death and sorrow and sin and shame.

Round the Beryl's sphere she saw them pass
And mock her eyes the fated glass :
One by one in a fiery train
The dead hours seemed to wax and wane,
And burned till all was known again.

From the drained heart's fount there rose no cry,
There sprang no tears, for the source was dry.
Held in the hand of some heavy law,
Her eyes she might not once withdraw,
Nor shrink away from the thing she saw.

Even as she gazed, through all her blood
The flame was quenched in a coming flood :
Out of the depth of the hollow gloom
On her soul's bare sands she felt it boom,—
The measured tide of a sea of doom.

Three steps she took through the altar-gate,
And her neck reared and her arms grew straight :
The sinews clenched like a serpent's throe,
And the face was white in the dark hair's flow,
As her hate beheld what lay below.

Dumb she stood in her malisons,—
A silver statue tressed with bronze :
As the fabled head by Perseus mown,
It seemed in sooth that her gaze alone
Had turned the carven shapes to stone.

O'er the altar-sides on either hand
There hung a dinted helm and brand :
By strength thereof, 'neath the Sacred Sign,
That better gift o'er the salt sea-brine
Her father brought from Palestine.

Rose Mary moved with a stern accord
And reached her hand to her father's sword;
Nor did she stir her gaze one whit
From the thing whereon her brows were knit;
But gazing still, she spoke to it.

"O ye, three times accurst," she said,
"By whom this stone is tenanted!
Lo! here ye came by a strong sin's might;
Yet a sinner's hand that's weak to smite
Shall send you hence ere the day be night.

"This hour a clear voice bade me know
My hand shall work your overthrow:
Another thing in mine ear it spake,—
With the broken spell my life shall break
I thank Thee, God, for the dear death's sake!

"And he Thy heavenly minister
Who swayed erewhile this spell-bound sphere,—
My parting soul let him haste to greet,
And none but he be guide for my feet
To where Thy rest is made complete."

Then deep she breathed, with a tender moan:—
"My love, my lord, my only one!
Even as I held the cursed clue,
When thee, through me, these foul ones slew,—
By mine own deed shall they slay me too!

"Even while they speed to Hell, my love,
Two hearts shall meet in Heaven above.
Our shrift thou sought'st, but might'st not bring:
And oh! for me 'tis a blessed thing
To work hereby our ransoming.

"One were our hearts in joy and pain,
And our souls e'en now grow one again.
And O my love, if our souls are three,
O thine and mine shall the third soul be,—
One threefold love eternally."

Her eyes were soft as she spoke apart,
And the lips smiled to the broken heart:
But the glance was dark and the forehead scored
With the bitter frown of hate restored,
As her two hands swung the heavy sword.

Three steps back from her Foe she trod:—
"Love, for thy sake! In Thy name, O God!"
In the fair white hands small strength was shown;
Yet the blade flashed high and the edge fell prone,
And she cleft the heart of the Beryl-stone.

What living flesh in the thunder-cloud
Hath sat and felt heaven cry aloud?
Or known how the levin's pulse may beat?
Or wrapped the hour when the whirlwinds meet
About its breast for a winding-sheet?

Who hath crouched at the world's deep heart
While the earthquake rends its loins apart?
Or walked far under the seething main
While overhead the heavens ordain
The tempest-towers of the hurricane?

Who hath seen or what ear hath heard
The secret things unregister'd
Of the place where all is past and done,
And tears and laughter sound as one
In Hell's unhallowed unison?

Nay, is it writ how the fiends despair
In earth and water and fire and air ?
Even so no mortal tongue may tell
How to the clang of the sword that fell
The echoes shook the altar-cell.

When all was still on the air again
The Beryl-stone lay cleft in twain ;
The veil was rent from the riven dome ;
And every wind that's winged to roam
Might have the ruined place for home.

The fountain no more glittered free ;
The fruit hung dead on the leafless tree ;
The flame of the lamp had ceased to flare :
And the crystal casket shattered there
Was emptied now of its cloud of air.

And lo ! on the ground Rose Mary lay,
With a cold brow like the snows ere May,
With a cold breast like the earth till Spring,
With such a smile as the June days bring
When the year grows warm for harvesting.

The death she had won might leave no trace
On the soft sweet form and gentle face :
In a gracious sleep she seemed to lie ;
And over her head her hand on high
Held fast the sword she triumphed by.

'Twas then a clear voice said in the room :—
" Behold the end of the heavy doom.
O come,—for thy bitter love's sake blest ;
By a sweet path now thou journeyest,
And I will lead thee to thy rest.

"Me thy sin by Heaven's sore ban
Did chase erewhile from the talisman:
But to my heart, as a conquered home,
In glory of strength thy footsteps come
Who has thus cast forth my foes therefrom.

"Already thy heart remembereth
No more his name thou sought'st in death:
For under all deeps, all heights above,—
So wide the gulf in the midst thereof,—
Are Hell of Treason and Heaven of Love.

"Thee, true soul, shall thy truth prefer
To blessed Mary's rose-bower:
Warmed and lit is thy place afar
With guerdon-fires of the sweet Love-star
Where hearts of steadfast lovers are:—

"Though naught for the poor corpse lying here
Remain to-day but the cold white bier,
But burial-chaunt and bended knee,
But sighs and tears that heaviest be,
But rent rose-flower and rosemary."

Beryl-Song.

We, cast forth from the Beryl,
Gyre-circling spirits of fire,
Whose pangs begin
With God's grace to sin,
For whose spent powers the immortal hours are sterile,—
Woe! must We behold this mother
Find grace in her dead child's face, and doubt of none other

But that perfect pardon, alas! hath assured her guerdon?
Woe! must We behold this daughter,
Made clean from the soil of sin wherewith We had fraught her,
Shake off a man's blood like water?
Write up her story
On the Gate of Heaven's glory,
Whom there We behold so fair in shining apparel,
And beneath her the ruin
Of our own undoing!
Alas, the Beryl!
We had for a foeman
But one weak woman;
In one day's strife,
Her hope fell dead from her life;
And yet no iron,
Her soul to environ,
Could this manslayer, this false soothsayer imperil!
Lo, where she bows
In the Holy House!
Who now shall dissever her soul from its joy for ever,
While every ditty
Of love and plentiful pity
Fills the White City,
And the floor of Heaven to her feet for ever is given?
Hark, a voice cries "Flee!"
Woe! woe! what shelter have We,
Whose pangs begin
With God's grace to sin,
For whose spent powers the immortal hours are sterile,
Gyre-circling spirits of fire,
We, cast forth from the Beryl?

THE WHITE SHIP.

HENRY I. OF ENGLAND.—25TH NOVEMBER, 1120.

By none but me can the tale be told,
The butcher of Rouen, poor Berold.
(*Lands are swayed by a King on a throne.*)
'Twas a royal train put forth to sea,
Yet the tale can be told by none but me.
(*The sea hath no King but God alone.*)

King Henry held it as life's whole gain
That after his death his son should reign.

'Twas so in my youth I heard men say,
And my old age calls it back to-day.

King Henry of England's realm was he,
And Henry Duke of Normandy.

The times had changed when on either coast
"Clerkly Harry" was all his boast.

Of ruthless strokes full many an one
He had struck to crown himself and his son;
And his elder brother's eyes were gone.

And when to the chase his court would crowd,
The poor flung ploughshares on his road,
And shrieked: "Our cry is from King to God!"

But all the chiefs of the English land
Had knelt and kissed the Prince's hand.

And next with his son he sailed to France
To claim the Norman allegiance:

And every baron in Normandy
Had taken the oath of fealty.

'Twas sworn and sealed, and the day had come
When the King and the Prince might journey home:

For Christmas cheer is to home hearts dear,
And Christmas now was drawing near.

Stout Fitz-Stephen came to the King,—
A pilot famous in seafaring;

And he held to the King, in all men's sight,
A mark of gold for his tribute's right.

"Liege Lord! my father guided the ship
From whose boat your father's foot did slip
When he caught the English soil in his grip,

"And cried: 'By this clasp I claim command
O'er every rood of English land!"

"He was borne to the realm you rule o'er now
In that ship with the archer carved at her prow:

"And thither I'll bear, and it be my due,
Your father's son and his grandson too.

"The famed White Ship is mine in the bay,
From Harfleur's harbour she sails to-day,

"With masts fair-pennoned as Norman spears
And with fifty well-tried mariners."

Quoth the King: "My ships are chosen each one,
But I'll not say nay to Stephen's son.

"My son and daughter and fellowship
Shall cross the water in the White Ship."

The King set sail with the eve's south wind,
And soon he left that coast behind.

The Prince and all his, a princely show,
Remained in the good White Ship to go.

With noble knights and with ladies fair,
With courtiers and sailors gathered there,
Three hundred living souls we were :

And I Berold was the meanest hind
In all that train to the Prince assign'd.

The Prince was a lawless shameless youth ;
From his father's loins he sprang without ruth :

Eighteen years till then he had seen,
And the devil's dues in him were eighteen.

And now he cried : " Bring wine from below ;
Let the sailors revel ere yet they row :

" Our speed shall o'ertake my father's flight
Though we sail from the harbor at midnight."

The rowers made good cheer without check ;
The lords and ladies obeyed his beck ;
The night was light, and they danced on the deck.

But at midnight's stroke they cleared the bay,
And the White Ship furrowed the water-way.

The sails were set, and the oars kept tune
To the double flight of the ship and the moon :

Swifter and swifter the White Ship sped
Till she flew as the spirit flies from the dead :

As white as a lily glimmered she
Like a ship's fair ghost upon the sea.

And the Prince cried, "Friends,'tis the hour to sing!
Is a songbird's course so swift on the wing?"

And under the winter stars' still throng,
From brown throats, white throats, merry and strong,
The knights and the ladies raised a song.

A song,—nay, a shriek that rent the sky,
That leaped o'er the deep!—the grievous cry
Of three hundred living that now must die.

An instant shriek that sprang to the shock
As the ship's keel felt the sunken rock.

'Tis said that afar—a shrill strange sigh—
The King's ships heard it and knew not why.

Pale Fitz-Stephen stood by the helm
'Mid all those folk that the waves must whelm.

A great King's heir for the waves to whelm,
And the helpless pilot pale at the helm!

The ship was eager and sucked athirst,
By the stealthy stab of the sharp reef pierc'd:

And like the moil round a sinking cup,
The waters against her crowded up.

A moment the pilot's senses spin,—
The next he snatched the Prince 'mid the din,
Cut the boat loose, and the youth leaped in.

A few friends leaped with him, standing near.
"Row! the sea's smooth and the night is clear!"

"What! none to be saved but these and I?"
"Row, row as you'd live! All here must die!"

Out of the churn of the choking ship,
Which the gulf grapples and the waves strip,
They struck with the strained oars' flash and dip.

'Twas then o'er the splitting bulwarks' brim
The Prince's sister screamed to him.

He gazed aloft, still rowing apace,
And through the whirled surf he knew her face.

To the toppling decks clave one and all
As a fly cleaves to a chamber-wall.

I Berold was clinging anear ;
I prayed for myself and quaked with fear,
But I saw his eyes as he looked at her.

He knew her face and he heard her cry,
And he said, "Put back ! she must not die !"

And back with the current's force they reel
Like a leaf that's drawn to a water-wheel.

'Neath the ship's travail they scarce might float,
But he rose and stood in the rocking boat.

Low the poor ship leaned on the tide ;
O'er the naked keel as she best might slide,
The sister toiled to the brother's side.

He reached an oar to her from below,
And stiffened his arms to clutch her so.

But now from the ship some spied the boat,
And "Saved !" was the cry from many a throat.

And down to the boat they leaped and fell :
It turned as a bucket turns in a well,
And nothing was there but the surge and swell.

The Prince that was and the King to come,
There in instant gone to his doom,

Despite of all England's bended knee
And maugre the Norman fealty!

He was a Prince of lust and pride;
He showed no grace till the hour he died.

When he should be King, he oft would vow,
He'd yoke the peasant to his own plough.
O'er him the ships score their furrows now.

God only knows where his soul did wake,
But I saw him die for his sister's sake.

By none but me can the tale be told,
The butcher of Rouen, poor Berold.
(*Lands are swayed by a King on a throne.*)
'Twas a royal train put forth to sea,
Yet the tale can be told by none but me,
(*The sea hath no King but God alone.*)

And now the end came o'er the water's womb
Like the last great Day that's yet to come.

With prayers in vain and curses in vain,
The White Ship sundered on the mid-main:

And what were men and what was a ship
Were toys and splinters in the sea's grip.

I Berold was down in the sea;
And passing strange though the thing may be,
Of dreams then known I remember me.

Blithe is the shout on Harfleur's strand
When morning lights the sails to land:

And blithe is Honfleur's echoing gloam
When mothers call the children home :

And high do the bells of Rouen beat
When the Body of Christ goes down the street.

These things and the like were heard and shown
In a moment's trance 'neath the sea alone ;

And when I rose, 'twas the sea did seem,
And not these things, to be all a dream.

The ship was gone and the crowd was gone,
And the deep shuddered and the moon shone,

And in a strait grasp my arms did span
The mainyard rent from the mast where it ran ;
And on it with me was another man.

Where lands were none 'neath the dim sea-sky
We told our names, that man and I.

" O I am Godefroy de l'Aigle hight,
And son I am to a belted knight."

" And I am Berold the butcher's son
Who slays the beasts in Rouen town."

Then cried we upon God's name, as we
Did drift on the bitter winter sea.

But lo ! a third man rose o'er the wave,
And we said, " Thank God ! us three may He save !"

He clutched to the yard with panting stare,
And we looked and knew Fitz-Stephen there.

He clung, and " What of the Prince ? " quoth he.
" Lost, lost ! " we cried. He cried, " Woe on me ! "
And loosed his hold and sank through the sea.

And soul with soul again in that space
We two were together face to face:

And each knew each, as the moments sped,
Less for one living than for one dead:

And every still star overhead
Seemed an eye that knew we were but dead.

And the hours passed; till the noble's son
Sighed, "God be thy help! my strength's foredone!

"O farewell, friend, for I can no more!"
"Christ take thee!" I moaned; and his life was o'er.

Three hundred souls were all lost but one,
And I drifted over the sea alone.

At last the morning rose on the sea
Like an angel's wing that beat tow'rds me.

Sore numbed I was in my sheepskin coat;
Half dead I hung, and might nothing note,
Till I woke sun-warmed in a fisher-boat.

The sun was high o'er the eastern brim
As I praised God and gave thanks to Him.

That day I told my tale to a priest,
Who charged me, till the shrift were releas'd,
That I should keep it in mine own breast.

And with the priest I thence did fare
To King Henry's court at Winchester.

We spoke with the King's high chamberlain,
And he wept and mourned again and again,
As if his own son had been slain:

And round us ever there crowded fast
Great men with faces all aghast :

And who so bold that might tell the thing
Which now they knew to their lord the King?
Much woe I learnt in their communing.

The King had watched with a heart sore stirred
For two whole days, and this was the third :

And still to all his court would he say,
"What keeps my son so long away?"

And they said : "The ports lie far and wide
That skirt the swell of the English tide ;

"And England's cliffs are not more white
Than her women are, and scarce so light
Her skies as their eyes are blue and bright ;

"And in some port that he reached from France
The Prince has lingered for his pleasaunce."

But once the King asked : "What distant cry
Was that we heard 'twixt the sea and sky?"

And one said : "With suchlike shouts, pardie!
Do the fishers fling their nets at sea."

And one : "Who knows not the shrieking quest
When the sea-mew misses its young from the nest?"

'Twas thus till now they had soothed his dread,
Albeit they knew not what they said :

But who should speak to-day of the thing
That all knew there except the King?

Then pondering much they found a way,
And met round the King's high seat that day :

And the King sat with a heart sore stirred,
And seldom he spoke and seldom heard.

'Twas then through the hall the King was 'ware
Of a little boy with golden hair,

As bright as the golden poppy is
That the beach breeds for the surf to kiss:

Yet pale his cheek as the thorn in Spring,
And his garb black like the raven's wing.

Nothing heard but his foot through the hall,
For now the lords were silent all.

And the King wondered, and said, "Alack!
Who sends me a fair boy dressed in black?

"Why, sweet heart, do you pace through the hall
As though my court were a funeral?"

Then lowly knelt the child at the dais,
And looked up weeping in the King's face.

"O wherefore black, O King, ye may say,
For white is the hue of death to-day.

"Your son and all his fellowship
Lie low in the sea with the White Ship."

King Henry fell as a man struck dead;
And speechless still he stared from his bed
When to him next day my rede I read.

There's many an hour must needs beguile
A King's high heart that he should smile,—

Full many a lordly hour, full fain
Of his realm's rule and pride of his reign:—

But this King never smiled again.

By none but me can the tale be told,
The butcher of Rouen, poor Berold.
(*Lands are swayed by a King on a throne.*)
'Twas a royal train put forth to sea,
Yet the tale can be told by none but me.
(*The sea hath no King but God alone.*)

THE KING'S TRAGEDY.

JAMES I. OF SCOTS.—20TH FEBRUARY, 1437.

NOTE.

Tradition says that Catherine Douglas, in honor of her heroic act when she barred the door with her arm against the murderers of James the First of Scots, received popularly the name of "Barlass." This name remains to her descendants, the Barlas family, in Scotland, who bear for their crest a broken arm. She married Alexander Lovell of Bolunnie.

A few stanzas from King James's lovely poem, known as *The King's Quair*, are quoted in the course of this ballad. The writer must express regret for the necessity which has compelled him to shorten the ten-syllabled lines to eight syllables, in order that they might harmonize with the ballad metre.

I CATHERINE am a Douglas born,
A name to all Scots dear;
And Kate Barlass they've called me now
Through many a waning year.

This old arm's withered now. 'Twas once
Most deft 'mong maidens all
To rein the steed, to wing the shaft,
To smite the palm-play ball.

In hall adown the close-linked dance
It has shone most white and fair,
It has been the rest for a true lord's head,
And many a sweet babe's nursing-bed,
And the bar to a King's chambère.

Aye, lasses, draw round Kate Barlass,
And hark with bated breath
How good King James, King Robert's son,
Was foully done to death.

Through all the days of his gallant youth
The princely James was pent,
By his friends at first and then by his foes,
In long imprisonment.

For the elder Prince, the kingdom's heir,
By treason's murderous brood
Was slain ; and the father quaked for the child
With the royal mortal blood.

I' the Bass Rock fort, by his father's care,
Was his childhood's life assured ;
And Henry the subtle Bolingbroke,
Proud England's King, 'neath the southron yoke
His youth for long years immured.

Yet in all things meet for a kingly man
Himself did he approve ;
And the nightingale through his prison-wall
Taught him both lore and love.

For once, when the bird's song drew him close
To the open window-pane,
In her bower beneath a lady stood,
A light of life to his sorrowful mood,
Like a lily amid the rain.

And for her sake, to the sweet bird's note,
He framed a sweeter Song,
More sweet than ever a poet's heart
Gave yet to the English tongue.

She was a lady of royal blood;
And when, past sorrow and teen,
He stood where still through his crownless years
His Scotish realm had been,
At Scone were the happy lovers crowned,
A heart-wed King and Queen.

But the bird may fall from the bough of youth,
And song be turned to moan,
And Love's storm-cloud be the shadow of Hate,
When the tempest-waves of a troubled State
Are beating against a throne.

Yet well they loved; and the god of Love,
Whom well the King had sung,
Might find on the earth no truer hearts
His lowliest swains among.

From the days when first she rode abroad
With Scotish maids in her train,
I Catherine Douglas won the trust
Of my mistress sweet Queen Jane.

And oft she sighed, "To be born a King!"
And oft along the way
When she saw the homely lovers pass
She has said, "Alack the day!"

Years waned,—the loving and toiling years:
Till England's wrong renewed
Drove James, by outrage cast on his crown,
To the open field of feud.

'Twas when the King and his host were met
At the leaguer of Roxbro' hold,
The Queen o' the sudden sought his camp
With a tale of dread to be told.

And she showed him a secret letter writ
That spoke of treasonous strife,
And how a band of his noblest lords
Were sworn to take his life.

"And it may be here or it may be there,
In the camp or the court," she said:
"But for my sake come to your people's arms
And guard your royal head."

Quoth he, "'Tis the fifteenth day of the siege,
And the castle's nigh to yield."
"O face your foes on your throne," she cried,
"And show the power you wield;
And under your Scotish people's love
You shall sit as under your shield."

At the fair Queen's side I stood that day
When he bade them raise the siege,
And back to his Court he sped to know
How the lords would meet their Liege.

But when he summoned his Parliament,
The louring brows hung round,
Like clouds that circle the mountain-head
Ere the first low thunders sound.

For he had tamed the nobles' lust
And curbed their power and pride,
And reached out an arm to right the poor
Through Scotland far and wide;
And many a lordly wrong-doer
By the headsman's axe had died.

'Twas then unspoke Sir Robert Græme,
The bold o'ermastering man :—
"O King, in the name of your Three Estates
I set you under their ban!

"For, as your lords made oath to you
Of service and fealty,
Even in like wise you pledged your oath
Their faithful sire to be :—

"Yet all we here that are nobly sprung
Have mourned dear kith and kin
Since first for the Scotish Barons' curse
Did your bloody rule begin."

With that he laid his hands on his King :—
"Is this not so, my lords?"
But of all who had sworn to league with him
Not one spake back to his words.

Quoth the King :—"Thou speak'st but for one Estate,
Nor doth it avow thy gage.
Let my liege lords hale this traitor hence!"
The Græme fired dark with rage :—
"Who works for lesser men than himself,
He earns but a witless wage!"

But soon from the dungeon where he lay
He won by privy plots,
And forth he fled with a price on his head
To the country of the Wild Scots.

And word there came from Sir Robert Græme
To the King at Edinbro' :—
"No Liege of mine thou art; but I see
From this day forth alone in thee
God's creature, my mortal foe.

"Through thee are my wife and children lost,
My heritage and lands;
And when my God shall show me a way,
Thyself my mortal foe will I slay
With these my proper hands."

Against the coming of Christmastide
That year the King bade call
I' the Black Friars' Charterhouse of Perth
A solemn festival.

And we of his household rode with him
In a close-ranked company;
But not till the sun had sunk from his throne
Did we reach the Scotish Sea.

That eve was clenched for a boding storm,
'Neath a toilsome moon half seen;
The cloud stooped low and the surf rose high;
And where there was a line of the sky,
Wild wings loomed dark between.

And on a rock of the black beach-side,
By the veiled moon dimly lit,
There was something seemed to heave with life
As the King drew nigh to it.

And was it only the tossing furze
Or brake of the waste sea-wold?
Or was it an eagle bent to the blast?
When near we came, we knew it at last
For a woman tattered and old.

But it seemed as though by a fire within
Her writhen limbs were wrung;
And as soon as the King was close to her,
She stood up gaunt and strong.

'Twas then the moon sailed clear of the rack
On high in her hollow dome:
And still as aloft with hoary crest
Each clamorous wave rang home,
Like fire in snow the moonlight blazed
Amid the champing foam

And the woman held his eyes with her eyes:—
"O King, thou art come at last,
But thy wraith has haunted the Scotish Sea
To my sight for four years past.

"Four years it is since first I met,
'Twixt the Duchray and the Dhu,
A shape whose feet clung close in a shroud,
And that shape for thine I knew.

"A year again, and on Inchkeith Isle
I saw thee pass in the breeze,
With the cerecloth risen above thy feet
And wound about thy knees.

"And yet a year, in the Links of Forth,
As a wanderer without rest,
Thou cam'st with both thine arms i' the shroud
That clung high up thy breast.

"And in this hour I find thee here,
And well mine eyes may note
That the winding-sheet hath passed thy breast
And risen around thy throat.

"And when I meet thee again, O King,
That of death hast such sore drouth,—
Except thou turn again on this shore,—
The winding-sheet shall have moved once more
And covered thine eyes and mouth.

"O King, whom poor men bless for their King,
Of thy fate be not so fain;
But these my words for God's message take,
And turn thy steed, O King, for her sake
Who rides beside thy rein!"

While the woman spoke, the King's horse reared
As if it would breast the sea,
And the Queen turned pale as she heard on the gale
The voice die dolorously.

When the woman ceased, the steed was still,
But the King gazed on her yet,
And in silence save for the wail of the sea
His eyes and her eyes met.

At last he said:—"God's ways are His own;
Man is but shadow and dust.
Last night I prayed by His altar-stone;
To-night I wend to the Feast of His Son;
And in Him I set my trust.

"I have held my people in sacred charge,
And have not feared the sting
Of proud men's hate,—to His will resign'd
Who has but one same death for a hind
And one same death for a King.

"And if God in His wisdom have brought close
The day when I must die,
That day by water or fire or air
My feet shall fall in the destined snare
Wherever my road may lie.

"What man can say but the Fiend hath set
Thy sorcery on my path,
My heart with the fear of death to fill,
And turn me against God's very will
To sink in His burning wrath?"

The woman stood as the train rode past,
And moved nor limb nor eye;
And when we were shipped, we saw her there
Still standing against the sky.

As the ship made way, the moon once more
Sunk slow in her rising pall;
And I thought of the shrouded wraith of the King,
And I said, "The Heavens know all."

And now, ye lasses, must ye hear
How my name is Kate Barlass:—
But a little thing, when all the tale
Is told of the weary mass
Of crime and woe which in Scotland's realm
God's will let come to pass.

'Twas in the Charterhouse of Perth
That the King and all his Court
Were met, the Christmas Feast being done,
For solace and disport.

'Twas a wind-wild eve in February,
And against the casement-pane
The branches smote like summoning hands,
And muttered the driving rain.

And when the wind swooped over the lift
And made the whole heaven frown,
It seemed a grip was laid on the walls
To tug the housetop down.

And the Queen was there, more stately fair
Than a lily in garden set;
And the King was loth to stir from her side;
For as on the day when she was his bride,
Even so he loved her yet.

And the Earl of Athole, the King's false friend,
Sat with him at the board;
And Robert Stuart the chamberlain
Who had sold his sovereign Lord.

Yet the traitor Christopher Chaumber there
Would fain have told him all,
And vainly four times that night he strove
To reach the King through the hall.

But the wine is bright at the goblet's brim
Though the poison lurk beneath;
And the apples still are red on the tree
Within whose shade may the adder be
That shall turn thy life to death.

There was a knight of the King's fast friends
Whom he called the King of Love;
And to such bright cheer and courtesy
That name might best behove.

And the King and the Queen both loved him well
For his gentle knightliness;
And with him the King, as that eve wore on,
Was playing at the chess.

And the King said, (for he thought to jest
And soothe the Queen thereby;)—
"In a book 'tis writ that this same year
A King shall in Scotland die.

"And I have pondered the matter o'er,
And this have I found, Sir Hugh,—
There are but two Kings on Scotish ground,
And those Kings are I and you.

"And I have a wife and a newborn heir,
And you are yourself alone;
So stand you stark at my side with me
To guard our double throne.

"For here sit I and my wife and child,
As well your heart shall approve,
In full surrender and soothfastness,
Beneath your Kingdom of Love."

And the Knight laughed, and the Queen too smiled;
But I knew her heavy thought,
And I strove to find in the good King's jest
What cheer might thence be wrought.

And I said, "My Liege, for the Queen's dear love
Now sing the song that of old
You made, when a captive Prince you lay,
And the nightingale sang sweet on the spray,
In Windsor's castle-hold."

Then he smiled the smile I knew so well
When he thought to please the Queen;
The smile which under all bitter frowns
Of fate that rose between
Forever dwelt at the poet's heart
Like the bird of love unseen.

And he kissed her hand and took his harp,
And the music sweetly rang;
And when the song burst forth, it seemed
'Twas the nightingale that sang.

" Worship, ye lovers, on this May :
Of bliss your kalends are begun :
Sing with us, Away, Winter, away!
Come, Summer, the sweet season and sun!
Awake for shame,—your heaven is won,—
And amorously your heads lift all :
Thank Love, that you to his grace doth call!"

But when he bent to the Queen, and sang
The speech whose praise was hers,
It seemed his voice was the voice of the Spring
And the voice of the bygone years.

" The fairest and the freshest flower
That ever I saw before that hour,
The which o' the sudden made to start
The blood of my body to my heart.
* * * * *
Ah sweet, are ye a worldly creature
Or heavenly thing in form of nature?"

And the song was long, and richly stored
With wonder and beauteous things :
And the harp was tuned to every change
Of minstrel ministerings :
But when he spoke of the Queen at the last,
Its strings were his own heart-strings.

" Unworthy but only of her grace,
Upon Love's rock that's easy and sure,
In guerdon of all my love's space
She took me her humble creature.
Thus fell my blissful aventure
In youth of love that from day to day
Flowereth aye new, and further I say.

" To reckon all the circumstance
As it happed when lessen gan my sore,
Of my rancor and woful chance,
It were too long,—I have done therefor.
And of this flower I say no more,
But unto my help her heart hath tended
And even from death her man defended."

" Aye, even from death," to myself I said;
For I thought of the day when she
Had borne him the news, at Roxbro' siege,
Of the fell confederacy.

But Death even then took aim as he sang
With an arrow deadly bright;
And the grinning skull lurked grimly aloof,
And the wings were spread far over the roof
More dark than the winter night.

Yet truly along the amorous song
Of Love's high pomp and state,
There were words of Fortune's trackless doom
And the dreadful face of Fate.

And oft have I heard again in dreams
The voice of dire appeal
In which the King then sang of the pit
That is under Fortune's wheel.

" And under the wheel beheld I there
An ugly Pit as deep as hell,
That to behold I quaked for fear:
And this I heard, that who therein fell
Came no more up, tidings to tell:
Whereat, astound of the fearful sight,
I wist not what to do for fright."

And oft has my thought called up again
These words of the changeful song :—
" *Wist thou thy pain and thy travàil*
To come, well might'st thou weep and waïl
And our wail, O God ! is long.

But the song's end was all of his love ;
And well his heart was grac'd
With her smiling lips and her tear-bright eyes
As his arm went round her waist.

And on the swell of her long fair throat
Close clung the necklet-chain
As he bent her pearl-tir'd head aside,
And in the warmth of his love and pride
He kissed her lips full fain.

And her true face was a rosy red,
The very red of the rose
That, couched on the happy garden-bed,
In the summer sunlight glows.

And all the wondrous things of love
That sang so sweet through the song
Were in the look that met in their eyes,
And the look was deep and long.

'Twas then a knock came at the outer gate,
And the usher sought the King.
" The woman you met by the Scotish Sea,
My Liege, would tell you a thing ;
And she says that her present need for speech
Will bear no gainsaying."

And the King said : " The hour is late ;
To-morrow will serve, I ween."
Then he charged the usher strictly, and said :
" No word of this to the Queen."

But the usher came again to the King.
"Shall I call her back?" quoth he:
"For as she went on her way, she cried,
'Woe! Woe! then the thing must be!'"

And the King paused, but he did not speak.
Then he called for the Voidee-cup:
And as we heard the twelfth hour strike,
There by true lips and false lips alike
Was the draught of trust drained up.

So with reverence meet to King and Queen,
To bed went all from the board;
And the last to leave of the courtly train
Was Robert Stuart the chamberlain
Who had sold his sovereign lord.

And all the locks of the chamber-door
Had the traitor riven and brast;
And that Fate might win sure way from afar,
He had drawn out every bolt and bar
That made the entrance fast.

And now at midnight he stole his way
To the moat of the outer wall,
And laid strong hurdles closely across
Where the traitor's tread should fall.

But we that were the Queen's bower-maids
Alone were left behind;
And with heed we drew the curtains close
Against the winter wind.

And now that all was still through the hall,
More clearly we heard the rain
That clamored ever against the glass
And the boughs that beat on the pane.

But the fire was bright in the ingle-nook,
And through empty space around
The shadows cast on the arras'd wall
'Mid the pictured kings stood sudden and tall
Like spectres sprung from the ground.

And the bed was dight in a deep alcove;
And as he stood by the fire
The King was still in talk with the Queen
While he doffed his goodly attire.

And the song had brought the image back
Of many a bygone year;
And many a loving word they said
With hand in hand and head laid to head;
And none of us went anear.

But Love was weeping outside the house,
A child in the piteous rain;
And as he watched the arrow of Death,
He wailed for his own shafts close in the sheath
That never should fly again.

And now beneath the window arose
A wild voice suddenly:
And the King reared straight, but the Queen fell back
As for bitter dule to dree;
And all of us knew the woman's voice
Who spoke by the Scotish Sea.

"O King," she cried, "in an evil hour
They drove me from thy gate;
And yet my voice must rise to thine ears;
But alas! it comes too late!

"Last night at mid-watch, by Aberdour,
When the moon was dead in the skies,
O King, in a death-light of thine own
I saw thy shape arise.

"And in full season, as erst I said,
The doom had gained its growth;
And the shroud had risen above thy neck
And covered thine eyes and mouth.

"And no moon woke, but the pale dawn broke,
And still thy soul stood there;
And I thought its silence cried to my soul
As the first rays crowned its hair.

"Since then have I journeyed fast and fain
In very despite of Fate,
Lest Hope might still be found in God's will:
But they drove me from thy gate.

"For every man on God's ground, O King,
His death grows up from his birth
In a shadow-plant perpetually;
And thine towers high, a black yew-tree,
O'er the Charterhouse of Perth!"

That room was built far out from the house;
And none but we in the room
Might hear the voice that rose beneath,
Nor the tread of the coming doom.

For now there came a torchlight-glare,
And a clang of arms there came;
And not a soul in that space but thought
Of the foe Sir Robert Græme.

Yea, from the country of the Wild Scots,
O'er mountain, valley, and glen,
He had brought with him in murderous league
Three hundred armèd men.

The King knew all in an instant's flash;
And like a King did he stand;
But there was no armor in all the room,
Nor weapon lay to his hand.

And all we women flew to the door
And thought to have made it fast;
But the bolts were gone and the bars were gone
And the locks were riven and brast.

And he caught the pale pale Queen in his arms
As the iron footsteps fell,—
Then loosed her, standing alone, and said,
"Our bliss was our farewell!"

And 'twixt his lips he murmured a prayer,
And he crossed his brow and breast;
And proudly in royal hardihood
Even so with folded arms he stood,—
The prize of the bloody quest.

Then on me leaped the Queen like a deer:—
"O Catherine, help!" she cried.
And low at his feet we clasped his knees
Together side by side.
"Oh! even a King, for his people's sake,
From treasonous death must hide!"

"For *her* sake most!" I cried, and I marked
The pang that my words could wring.
And the iron tongs from the chimney-nook
I snatched and held to the king:—
"Wrench up the plank! and the vault beneath
Shall yield safe harboring."

With brows low-bent, from my eager hand
The heavy heft did he take ;
And the plank at his feet he wrenched and tore ;
And as he frowned through the open floor,
Again I said, "For her sake!"

Then he cried to the Queen, "God's will be done!"
For her hands were clasped in prayer.
And down he sprang to the inner crypt ;
And straight we closed the plank he had ripp'd
And toiled to smooth it fair.

(Alas! in that vault a gap once was
Wherethro' the King might have fled :
But three days since close-walled had it been
By his will : for the ball would roll therein
When without at the palm he play'd.)

Then the Queen cried, "Catherine, keep the door,
And I to this will suffice!"
At her word I rose all dazed to my feet,
And my heart was fire and ice.

And louder ever the voices grew,
And the tramp of men in mail ;
Until to my brain it seemed to be
As though I tossed on a ship at sea
In the teeth of a crashing gale.

Then back I flew to the rest ; and hard
We strove with sinews knit
To force the table against the door ;
But we might not compass it.

Then my wild gaze sped far down the hall
To the place of the hearthstone-sill ;
And the Queen bent ever above the floor,
For the plank was rising still.

And now the rush was heard on the stair,
And "God, what help?" was our cry.
And was I frenzied or was I bold?
I looked at each empty stanchion-hold,
And no bar but my arm had I!

Like iron felt my arm, as through
The staple I made it pass:—
Alack! it was flesh and bone—no more!
'Twas Catherine Douglas sprang to the door,
But I fell back Kate Barlass.

With that they all thronged into the hall,
Half dim to my failing ken;
And the space that was but a void before
Was a crowd of wrathful men.

Behind the door I had fall'n and lay,
Yet my sense was wildly aware,
And for all the pain of my shattered arm
I never fainted there.

Even as I fell, my eyes were cast
Where the King leaped down to the pit;
And lo! the plank was smooth in its place,
And the Queen stood far from it.

And under the litters and through the bed
And within the presses all
The traitors sought for the King, and pierced
The arras around the wall.

And through the chamber they ramped and stormed
Like lions loose in the lair,
And scarce could trust to their very eyes,—
For behold! no King was there.

Then one of them seized the Queen, and cried,—
"Now tell us, where is thy lord?
And he held the sharp point over her heart:
She drooped not her eyes nor did she start,
But she answered never a word.

Then the sword half pierced the true true breast;
But it was the Græme's own son
Cried, "This is a woman,—we seek a man!"
And away from her girdle zone
He struck the point of the murderous steel;
And that foul deed was not done.

And forth flowed all the throng like a sea
And 'twas empty space once more;
And my eyes sought out the wounded Queen
As I lay behind the door.

And I said: "Dear Lady, leave me here,
For I cannot help you now;
But fly while you may, and none shall reck
Of my place here lying low."

And she said, "My Catherine, God help thee!"
Then she looked to the distant floor,
And clasping her hands, "O God help *him*,"
She sobbed, "for we can no more!"

But God He knows what help may mean,
If it mean to live or to die;
And what sore sorrow and mighty moan
On earth it may cost ere yet a throne
Be filled in His house on high.

And now the ladies fled with the Queen;
And through the open door
The night-wind wailed round the empty room
And the rushes shook on the floor.

And the bed drooped low in the dark recess
Whence the arras was rent away ;
And the firelight still shone over the space
Where our hidden secret lay.

And the rain had ceased, and the moonbeams lit
The window high in the wall,—
Bright beams that on the plank that I knew
Through the painted pane did fall,
And gleamed with the splendor of Scotland's crown
And shield armorial.

But then a great wind swept up the skies
And the climbing-moon fell back ;
And the royal blazon fled from the floor,
And nought remained on its track ;
And high in the darkened window-pane
The shield and the crown were black.

And what I say next I partly saw
And partly I heard in sooth,
And partly since from the murderers' lips
The torture wrung the truth.

For now again came the armèd tread,
And fast through the hall it fell ;
But the throng was less ; and ere I saw,
By the voice without I could tell
That Robert Stuart had come with them
Who knew that chamber well.

And over the space the Græme strode dark
With his mantle round him flung ;
And in his eye was a flaming light
But not a word on his tongue.

And Stuart held a torch to the floor,
And he found the thing he sought;
And they slashed the plank away with their swords;
And O God! I fainted not!

And the traitor held his torch in the gap,
All smoking and smouldering;
And through the vapor and fire, beneath
In the dark crypt's narrow ring,
With a shout that pealed to the room's high roof
They saw their naked King.

Half naked he stood, but stood as one
Who yet could do and dare:
With the crown, the King was stript away,—
The Knight was 'reft of his battle-array,—
But still the Man was there.

From the rout then stepped a villain forth,—
Sir John Hall was his name;
With a knife unsheathed he leapt to the vault
Beneath the torchlight-flame.

Of his person and stature was the King
A man right manly strong,
And mightily by the shoulder-blades
His foe to his feet he flung.

Then the traitor's brother, Sir Thomas Hall,
Sprang down to work his worst;
And the King caught the second man by the neck
And flung him above the first.

And he smote and trampled them under him ;
And a long month thence they bare
All black their throats with the grip of his hands
When the hangman's hand came there.

And sore he strove to have had their knives,
But the sharp blades gashed his hands.
Oh James ! so armed, thou hadst battled there
Till help had come of thy bands ;
And oh ! once more thou hadst held our throne
And ruled thy Scotish lands !

But while the King o'er his foes still raged
With a heart that nought could tame,
Another man sprang down to the crypt ;
And with his sword in his hand hard-gripp'd,
There stood Sir Robert Gæme.

(Now shame on the recreant traitor's heart
Who durst not face his King
Till the body unarmed was wearied out
With two-fold combating !

Ah ! well might the people sing and say,
As oft ye have heard aright :—
" O Robert Græme, O Robert Græme,
Who slew our King, God give thee shame!
For he slew him not as a knight.)

And the naked King turned round at bay,
But his strength had passed the goal,
And he could but gasp :—" Mine hour is come ;
But oh ! to succor thine own soul's doom,
Let a priest now shrive my soul !"

And the traitor looked on the King's spent strength,
And said :—"Have I kept my word ?—
Yea, King, the mortal pledge that I gave ?
No black friar's shrift thy soul shall have,
But the shrift of this red sword ! "

With that he smote his King through the breast ;
And all they three in that pen
Fell on him and stabbed and stabbed him there
Like merciless murderous men.

Yet seemed it now that Sir Robert Gæme,
Ere the King's last breath was o'er,
Turned sick at heart with the deadly sight
And would have done no more.

But a cry came from the troop above :—
"If him thou do not slay,
The price of his life that thou dost spare
Thy forfeit life shall pay ! "

O God ! what more did I hear or see,
Or how should I tell the rest ?
But there at length our King lay slain
With sixteen wounds in his breast.

O God ! and now did a bell boom forth,
And the murderers turned and fled ;—
Too late, too late, O God, did it sound !—
And I heard the true men mustering round,
And the cries and the coming tread.

But ere they came, to the black death-gap
Somewise did I creep and steal ;
And lo ! or ever I swooned away,
Through the dusk I saw where the white face lay
In the Pit of Fortune's Wheel.

And now, ye Scotish maids who have heard
  Dread things of the days grown old,—
Even at the last, of true Queen Jane
  May somewhat yet be told,
And how she dealt for her dear lord's sake
  Dire vengeance manifold.

'Twas in the Charterhouse of Perth,
  In the fair-lit Death-chapelle,
That the slain King's corpse on bier was laid
  With chaunt and requiem-knell.

And all with royal wealth of balm
  Was the body purified ;
And none could trace on the brow and lips
  The death that he had died.

In his robes of state he lay asleep
  With orb and sceptre in hand ;
And by the crown he wore on his throne
  Was his kingly forehead spann'd.

And, girls, 'twas a sweet sad thing to see
  How the curling golden hair,
As in the days of the poet's youth,
  From the King's crown clustered there.

And if all had come to pass in the brain
  That throbbed beneath those curls,
Then Scots had said in the days to come
That this their soil was a different home
  And a different Scotland, girls !

And the Queen sat by him night and day,
  And oft she knelt in prayer,
All wan and pale in the widow's veil
  That shrouded her shining hair.

And I had got good help of my hurt:
  And only to me some sign
She made; and save the priests that were there,
  No face would she see but mine.

And the month of March wore on apace;
  And now fresh couriers fared
Still from the country of the Wild Scots
  With news of the traitors snared.

And still as I told her day by day,
  Her pallor changed to sight,
And the frost grew to a furnace-flame
  That burnt her visage white.

And evermore as I brought her word,
  She bent to her dead King James,
And in the cold ear with fire-drawn breath
  She spoke the traitors' names.

But when the name of Sir Robert Græme
  Was the one she had to give,
I ran to hold her up from the floor;
For the froth was on her lips, and sore
  I feared that she could not live.

And the month of March wore nigh to its end,
  And still was the death-pall spread;
For she would not bury her slaughtered lord
  Till his slayers all were dead.

And now of their dooms dread tidings came,
  And of torments fierce and dire;
And nought she spake,—she had ceased to speak,
  But her eyes were a soul on fire.

But when I told her the bitter end
  Of the stern and just award,
She leaned o'er the bier, and thrice three times
  She kissed the lips of her lord.

And then she said,—"My King, they are dead!"
  And she knelt on the chapel-floor,
And whispered low with a strange proud smile,—
  "James, James, they suffered more!"

Last she stood up to her queenly height,
  But she shook like an autumn leaf,
As though the fire wherein she burned
Then left her body, and all were turned
  To winter of life-long grief.

And "O James!" she said,—"My James!" she said,—
  "Alas for the woful thing,
That a poet true and a friend of man,
In desperate days of bale and ban,
  Should needs be born a King!"

THE HOUSE OF LIFE.

A SONNET-SEQUENCE.

PART I.

YOUTH AND CHANGE.

PART II.

CHANGE AND FATE.

(The present full series of *The House of Life* consists of sonnets only. It will be evident that many among those now first added are still the work of earlier years.—1881.)*

A Sonnet is a moment's monument,—
Memorial from the Soul's eternity
To one dead deathless hour. Look that it be,
Whether for lustral rite or dire portent,
Of its own arduous fulness reverent:
Carve it in ivory or in ebony,
As Day or Night may rule; and let Time see
Its flowering crest impearled and orient.

A Sonnet is a coin: its face reveals
The soul,—its converse, to what Power 'tis due:—
Whether for tribute to the august appeals
Of Life, or dower in Love's high retinue,
It serve; or, 'mid the dark wharf's cavernous breath,
In Charon's palm it pay the toll to Death.

* This note appeared in the volume *Ballads and Sonnets*, 1881. The point which it emphasizes is that a series entitled *The House of Life* had been published in the volume *Poems* of 1870, consisting at that time partly of sonnets and partly of other compositions; whereas in the volume *Ballads and*

PART I.—*YOUTH AND CHANGE.*

SONNET I.

LOVE ENTHRONED.

I MARKED all kindred Powers the heart finds fair :—
  Truth, with awed lips; and Hope, with eyes upcast;
  And Fame, whose loud wings fan the ashen Past
To signal-fires, Oblivion's flight to scare;
And Youth, with still some single golden hair
  Unto his shoulder clinging, since the last
  Embrace wherein two sweet arms held him fast;
And Life, still wreathing flowers for Death to wear.

Love's throne was not with these; but far above
  All passionate wind of welcome and farewell
He sat in breathless bowers they dream not of;
  Though Truth foreknow Love's heart, and Hope foretell,
  And Fame be for Love's sake desirable,
And Youth be dear, and Life be sweet to Love.

Sonnets the series thus entitled consisted solely of sonnets, and was in other respects not a little different.

The dates of the various sonnets which make up this series are extremely various. The earliest of them may date in 1848, or even a year or so preceding. The latest come close before, or even in, 1881, in the autumn of which year the series was published in the same form which it now bears. One positive line of demarcation between the various sonnets separates those which appeared in the volume *Poems*, published in the Spring of 1870. from any others. I am far from having a clear idea or definite information as to the true dates of the sonnets.

The Recollections of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, the work of the friend of his closing days, Mr. Hall Caine, shows that the author regarded *Still-born Love*, *Known in Vain*, *Lost Days*, and *The One Hope* (Nos. 55, 65, 86, and 101), as about the best of the series.

SONNET II.

BRIDAL BIRTH.

As when desire, long darkling, dawns, and first
  The mother looks upon the newborn child,
  Even so my Lady stood at gaze and smiled
When her soul knew at length the Love it nurs'd.
Born with her life, creature of poignant thirst
  And exquisite hunger, at her heart Love lay
  Quickening in darkness, till a voice that day
Cried on him, and the bonds of birth were burst.

Now, shadowed by his wings, our faces yearn
  Together, as his full-grown feet now range
    The grove, and his warm hands our couch prepare:
Till to his song our bodiless souls in turn
  Be born his children, when Death's nuptial change
    Leaves us for light the halo of his hair.

SONNET III.

LOVE'S TESTAMENT.

O THOU who at Love's hour ecstatically
  Unto my heart dost evermore present,
  Clothed with his fire, thy heart his testament;
Whom I have neared and felt thy breath to be
The inmost incense of his sanctuary;
  Who without speech hast owned him, and, intent
  Upon his will, thy life with mine hast blent,
And murmured, "I am thine, thou'rt one with me!"

O what from thee the grace, to me the prize,
  And what to Love the glory,—when the whole
  Of the deep stair thou tread'st to the dim shoal
And weary water of the place of sighs,
And there dost work deliverance, as thine eyes
  Draw up my prisoned spirit to thy soul!

SONNET IV.

LOVESIGHT.

When do I see thee most, beloved one?
When in the light the spirits of mine eyes
Before thy face, their altar, solemnize
The worship of that Love through thee made known?
Or when in the dusk hours, (we two alone,)
Close-kissed and eloquent of still replies
Thy twilight-hidden glimmering visage lies,
And my soul only sees thy soul its own?

O love, my love! if I no more should see
Thyself, nor on the earth the shadow of thee,
Nor image of thine eyes in any spring,—
How then should sound upon Life's darkening slope
The ground-whirl of the perished leaves of Hope,
The wind of Death's imperishable wing?

SONNET V.

HEART'S HOPE.

By what word's power, the key of paths untrod,
Shall I the difficult deeps of Love explore,
Till parted waves of Song yield up the shore
Even as that sea which Israel crossed dryshod?
For lo! in some poor rhythmic period,
Lady, I fain would tell how evermore
Thy soul I know not from thy body, nor
Thee from myself, neither our love from God.

Yea, in God's name, and Love's, and thine, would I
Draw from one loving heart such evidence
As to all hearts all things shall signify;
Tender as dawn's first hill-fire, and intense
As instantaneous penetrating sense,
In Spring's birth-hour, of other Springs gone by.

SONNET VI.

THE KISS.

WHAT smouldering senses in death's sick delay
Or seizure of malign vicissitude
Can rob this body of honor, or denude
This soul of wedding-raiment worn to-day?
For lo! even now my lady's lips did play
With these my lips such consonant interlude
As laurelled Orpheus longed for when he wooed
The half-drawn hungering face with that last lay.

I was a child beneath her touch,—a man
When breast to breast we clung, even I and she,—
A spirit when her spirit looked through me,—
A god when all our life-breath met to fan
Our life-blood, till love's emulous ardors ran,
Fire within fire, desire in deity.

SONNET VII.

SUPREME SURRENDER.

To all the spirits of Love that wander by
Along his love-sown harvest-field of sleep
My lady lies apparent; and the deep
Calls to the deep; and no man sees but I.
The bliss so long afar, at length so nigh,
Rests there attained. Methinks proud Love must weep
When Fate's control doth from his harvest reap
The sacred hour for which the years did sigh.

First touched, the hand now warm around my neck
Taught memory long to mock desire: and lo!
Across my breast the abandoned hair doth flow,
Where one shorn tress long stirred the longing ache:
And next the heart that trembled for its sake
Lies the queen-heart in sovereign overthrow.

SONNET VIII.

LOVE'S LOVERS.

Some ladies love the jewels in Love's zone,
And gold-tipped darts he hath for painless play
In idle scornful hours he flings away;
And some that listen to his lute's soft tone
Do love to vaunt the silver praise their own;
Some prize his blindfold sight; and there be they
Who kissed his wings which brought him yesterday
And thank his wings to-day that he is flown.

My lady only loves the heart of Love:
Therefore Love's heart, my lady, hath for thee
His bower of unimagined flower and tree:
There kneels he now, and all-anhungered of
Thine eyes gray-lit in shadowing hair above,
Seals with thy mouth his immortality.

SONNET IX.

PASSION AND WORSHIP.

One flame-winged brought a white-winged harp-player
Even where my lady and I lay all alone;
Saying: "Behold, this minstrel is unknown;
Bid him depart, for I am minstrel here:
Only my strains are to Love's dear ones dear."
Then said I: "Through thine hautboy's rapturous tone
Unto my lady still this harp makes moan,
And still she deems the cadence deep and clear."

Then said my lady: "Thou art Passion of Love,
And this Love's Worship: both he plights to me.
Thy mastering music walks the sunlit sea:
But where wan water trembles in the grove
And the wan moon is all the light thereof,
This harp still makes my name its voluntary."

SONNET X.

THE PORTRAIT.

O Lord of all compassionate control,
O Love! let this my lady's picture glow
Under my hand to praise her name, and show
Even of her inner self the perfect whole:
That he who seeks her beauty's furthest goal,
Beyond the light that the sweet glances throw
And refluent wave of the sweet smile, may know
The very sky and sea-line of her soul.

Lo! it is done. Above the enthroning throat
The mouth's mould testifies of voice and kiss,
The shadowed eyes remember and foresee.
Her face is made her shrine. Let all men note
That in all years (O Love, thy gift is this!)
They that would look on her must come to me.

SONNET XI.

THE LOVE-LETTER.

Warmed by her hand and shadowed by her hair
As close she leaned and poured her heart through thee,
Whereof the articulate throbs accompany
The smooth black stream that makes thy whiteness fair,—

Sweet fluttering sheet, even of her breath aware,—
Oh let thy silent song disclose to me
That soul wherewith her lips and eyes agree
Like married music in Love's answering air.

Fain had I watched her when, at some fond thought,
Her bosom to the writing closelier press'd,
And her breast's secrets peered into her breast;
When, through eyes raised an instant, her soul sought
My soul, and from the sudden confluence caught
The words that made her love the loveliest.

SONNET XII.

THE LOVER'S WALK.

SWEET twining hedgeflowers wind-stirred in no wise
On this June day; and hand that clings in hand:—
Still glades; and meeting faces scarcely fann'd:—
An osier-odored stream that draws the skies
Deep to its heart; and mirrored eyes in eyes:—
Fresh hourly wonder o'er the Summer land
Of light and cloud; and two souls softly spann'd
With one o'erarching heaven of smiles and sighs:—

Even such their path, whose bodies lean unto
Each other's visible sweetness amorously,—
Whose passionate hearts lean by Love's high decree
Together on his heart forever true,
As the cloud-foaming firmamental blue
Rests on the blue line of a foamless sea.

SONNET XIII.

YOUTH'S ANTIPHONY.

"I LOVE you, sweet: how can you ever learn
How much I love you?" "You I love even so,
And so I learn it." "Sweet, you cannot know
How fair you are." "If fair enough to earn

Your love, so much is all my love's concern."
"My love grows hourly, sweet." "Mine too doth grow,
Yet love seemed full so many hours ago!"
Thus lovers speak, till kisses claim their turn.

Ah! happy they to whom such words as these
In youth have served for speech the whole day long,
Hour after hour, remote from the world's throng,
Work, contest, fame, all life's confederate pleas,—
What while Love breathed in sighs and silences
Through two blent souls one rapturous undersong.

SONNET XIV.

YOUTH'S SPRING-TRIBUTE.

On this sweet bank your head thrice sweet and dear
I lay, and spread your hair on either side,
And see the newborn woodflowers bashful-eyed
Look through the golden tresses here and there.
On these debateable borders of the year
Spring's foot half falters; scarce she yet may know
The leafless blackthorn-blossom from the snow;
And through her bowers the wind's way still is clear.

But April's sun strikes down the glades to-day;
So shut your eyes upturned, and feel my kiss
Creep, as the Spring now thrills through every spray,
Up your warm throat to your warm lips: for this
Is even the hour of Love's sworn suitservice,
With whom cold hearts are counted castaway.

SONNET XV.

THE BIRTH-BOND.

HAVE you not noted, in some family
Where two were born of a first marriage-bed,
How still they own their gracious bond, though fed
And nursed on the forgotten breast and knee?—
How to their father's children they shall be
In act and thought of one goodwill; but each
Shall for the other have, in silence speech,
And in a word complete community?

Even so, when first I saw you, seemed it, love,
That among souls allied to mine was yet
One nearer kindred than life hinted of.
O born with me somewhere that men forget,
And though in years of sight and sound unmet,
Known for my soul's birth-partner well enough!

SONNET XVI.

A DAY OF LOVE.

THOSE envied places which do know her well,
And are so scornful of this lonely place,
Even now for once are emptied of her grace:
Nowhere but here she is: and while Love's spell
From his predominant presence doth compel
All alien hours, an outworn populace,
The hours of Love fill full the echoing space
With sweet confederate music favorable.

Now many memories make solicitous
The delicate love-lines of her mouth, till, lit
With quivering fire, the words take wing from it;
As here between our kisses we sit thus
Speaking of things remembered, and so sit
Speechless while things forgotten call to us.

SONNET XVII.

BEAUTY'S PAGEANT.

WHAT dawn-pulse at the heart of heaven, or last
Incarnate flower of culminating day,—
What marshalled marvels on the skirts of May,
Or song full-quired, sweet June's encomiast;
What glory of change by Nature's hand amass'd
Can vie with all those moods of varying grace
Which o'er one loveliest woman's form and face
Within this hour, within this room, have pass'd?

Love's very vesture and elect disguise
Was each fine movement,—wonder new-begot
Of lily or swan or swan-stemmed galiot;
Joy to his sight who now the sadlier sighs,
Parted again; and sorrow yet for eyes
Unborn, that read these words and saw her not.

SONNET XVIII.

GENIUS IN BEAUTY.

BEAUTY like hers is genius. Not the call
Of Homer's or of Dante's heart sublime,—
Not Michael's hand furrowing the zones of time,—
Is more with compassed mysteries musical;
Nay, not in Spring's or Summer's sweet footfall
More gathered gifts exuberant Life bequeaths
Than doth this sovereign face, whose love-spell breathes
Even from its shadowed contour on the wall.

As many men are poets in their youth,
But for one sweet-strung soul the wires prolong
Even through all change the indomitable song;

So in likewise the envenomed years, whose tooth
Rends shallower grace with ruin void of ruth,
Upon this beauty's power shall wreak no wrong.

SONNET XIX.

SILENT NOON.

Your hands lie open in the long fresh grass,—
The finger-points look through like rosy blooms:
Your eyes smile peace. The pasture gleams and glooms
'Neath billowing skies that scatter and amass.
All round our nest, far as the eye can pass,
Are golden kingcup-fields with silver edge
Where the cow-parsley skirts the hawthorn-hedge.
'Tis visible silence, still as the hour-glass.

Deep in the sun-searched growths the dragon-fly
Hangs like a blue thread loosened from the sky:—
So this wing'd hour is dropt to us from above.
Oh! clasp we to our hearts, for deathless dower,
This close-companioned inarticulate hour
When twofold silence was the song of love.

SONNET XX.

GRACIOUS MOONLIGHT.

Even as the moon grows queenlier in mid-space
When the sky darkens, and her cloud-rapt car
Thrills with intenser radiance from afar,—
So lambent, lady, beams thy sovereign grace
When the drear soul desires thee. Of that face
What shall be said,—which, like a governing star,
Gathers and garners from all things that are
Their silent penetrative loveliness?

O'er water-daisies and wild waifs of Spring,
  There where the iris rears its gold-crowned sheaf
  With flowering rush and sceptred arrow-leaf,
So have I marked Queen Dian, in bright ring
Of cloud above and wave below, take wing
  And chase night's gloom, as thou the spirit's grief.

SONNET XXI.

LOVE-SWEETNESS.

Sweet dimness of her loosened hair's downfall
  About thy face; her sweet hands round thy head
  In gracious fostering union garlanded;
Her tremulous smiles; her glances' sweet recall
Of love; her murmuring sighs memorial;
  Her mouth's culled sweetness by thy kisses shed
  On cheeks and neck and eyelids, and so led
Back to her mouth which answers there for all:—

What sweeter than these things, except the thing
  In lacking which all these would lose their sweet:—
  The confident heart's still fervor: the swift beat
And soft subsidence of the spirit's wing,
Then when it feels, in cloud-girt wayfaring,
  The breath of kindred plumes against its feet?

SONNET XXII.

HEART'S HAVEN.

Sometimes she is a child within mine arms,
  Cowering beneath dark wings that love must chase,—
  With still tears showering and averted face,
Inexplicably filled with faint alarms:
And oft from mine own spirit's hurtling harms
  I crave the refuge of her deep embrace,—
  Against all ills the fortified strong place
And sweet reserve of sovereign counter-charms.

And Love, our light at night and shade at noon,
Lulls us to rest with songs, and turns away
All shafts of shelterless tumultuous day.
Like the moon's growth, his face gleams through his tune;
And as soft waters warble to the moon,
Our answering spirits chime one roundelay.

SONNET XXIII.

LOVE'S BAUBLES.

I stood where Love in brimming armfuls bore
Slight wanton flowers and foolish toys of fruit:
And round him ladies thronged in warm pursuit,
Fingered and lipped and proffered the strange store.
And from one hand the petal and the core
Savored of sleep; and cluster and curled shoot
Seemed from another hand like shame's salute,—
Gifts that I felt my cheek was blushing for.

At last Love bade my Lady give the same:
And as I looked, the dew was light thereon;
And as I took them, at her touch they shone
With inmost heaven-hue of the heart of flame.
And then Love said: "Lo! when the hand is hers,
Follies of love are love's true ministers."

SONNET XXIV.

PRIDE OF YOUTH.

Even as a child, of sorrow that we give
The dead, but little in his heart can find,
Since without need of thought to his clear mind
Their turn it is to die and his to live:—

Even so the winged New Love smiles to receive
  Along his eddying plumes the auroral wind,
  Nor, forward glorying, casts one look behind
Where night-rack shrouds the Old Love fugitive.

There is a change in every hour's recall,
  And the last cowslip in the fields we see
  On the same day with the first corn-poppy.
Alas for hourly change! Alas for all
The loves that from his hand proud Youth lets fall,
  Even as the beads of a told rosary!

SONNET XXV.

WINGED HOURS.

Each hour until we meet is as a bird
  That wings from far his gradual way along
  The rustling covert of my soul,—his song
Still loudlier trilled through leaves more deeply stirr'd:
But at the hour of meeting, a clear word
  Is every note he sings, a clear in Love's own tongue;
  Yet, Love, thou know'st the sweet strain suffers wrong
Full oft through our contending joys unheard.

What of that hour at last, when for her sake
  No wing may fly to me nor song may flow;
  When, wandering round my life unleaved, I know
The bloodied feathers scattered in the brake,
And think how she, far from me, with like eyes
Sees through the untuneful bough the wingless skies?

SONNET XXVI.

MID-RAPTURE.

Thou lovely and beloved, thou my love;
  Whose kiss seems still the first; whose summoning eyes,
  Even now, as for our love-world's new sunrise,
Shed very dawn; whose voice, attuned above

All modulation of the deep-bowered dove,
  Is like a hand laid softly on the soul;
  Whose hand is like a sweet voice to control
Those worn tired brows it hath the keeping of:—

What word can answer to thy word,—what gaze
  To thine, which now absorbs within its sphere
  My worshipping face, till I am mirrored there
Light-circled in a heaven of deep-drawn rays?
What clasp, what kiss mine inmost heart can prove,
O lovely and beloved, O my love?

SONNET XXVII.

HEART'S COMPASS.

Sometimes thou seem'st not as thyself alone,
  But as the meaning of all things that are;
  A breathless wonder, shadowing forth afar
Some heavenly solstice hushed and halcyon;
Whose unstirred lips are music's visible tone;
  Whose eyes the sun-gate of the soul unbar,
  Being of its furthest fires oracular;—
The evident heart of all life sown and mown.

Even such Love is; and is not thy name Love?
  Yea, by thy hand the Love-god rends apart
  All gathering clouds of Night's ambiguous art;
Flings them far down, and sets thine eyes above;
And simply, as some gage of flower or glove,
  Stakes with a smile the world against thy heart.

SONNET XXVIII.

SOUL-LIGHT.

What other woman could be loved like you,
  Or how of you should love possess his fill?
  After the fulness of all rapture, still,—
As at the end of some deep avenue

A tender glamour of day,—there comes to view
  Far in your eyes a yet more hungering thrill,—
  Such fire as Love's soul-winnowing hands distil
Even from his inmost arc of light and dew.

And as the traveller triumphs with the sun,
  Glorying in heat's mid-height, yet startide brings
  Wonder new-born, and still fresh transport springs
From limpid lambent hours of day begun ;—
Even so, through eyes and voice, your soul doth move
My soul with changeful light of infinite love.

SONNET XXIX.

THE MOONSTAR.

Lady, I thank thee for thy loveliness,
  Because my lady is more lovely still.
  Glorying I gaze, and yield with glad goodwill
To thee thy tribute ; by whose sweet-spun dress
Of delicate life Love labors to assess
  My lady's absolute queendom ; saying, " Lo !
  How high this beauty is, which yet doth show
But as that beauty's sovereign votaress."

Lady, I saw thee with her, side by side ;
  And as, when night's fair fires their queen surround,
An emulous star too near the moon will ride,—
  Even so thy rays within her luminous bound
  Were traced no more ; and by the light so drown'd,
Lady, not thou but she was glorified.

SONNET XXX.

LAST FIRE.

Love, through your spirit and mine what summer eve
  Now glows with glory of all things possess'd,
  Since this day's sun of rapture filled the west
And the light sweetened as the fire took leave ?

Awhile now softlier let your bosom heave,
As in Love's harbor, even that loving breast,
All care takes refuge while we sink to rest,
And mutual dreams the bygone bliss retrieve.

Many the days that Winter keeps in store,
Sunless throughout, or whose brief sun-glimpses
Scarce shed the heaped snow through the naked trees.
This day at least was Summer's paramour,
Sun-colored to the imperishable core
With sweet well-being of love and full heart's ease.

SONNET XXXI.

HER GIFTS.

High grace, the dower of queens; and therewithal
Some wood-born wonder's sweet simplicity
A glance like water brimming with the sky
Or hyacinth-light where forest-shadows fall:
Such thrilling pallor of cheek as doth enthral
The heart; a mouth whose passionate forms imply
All music and all silence held thereby;
Deep golden locks, her sovereign coronal;
A round reared neck, meet column of Love's shrine
To cling to when the heart takes sanctuary;
Hands which forever at Love's bidding be,
And soft-stirred feet still answering to his sign:—
These are her gifts, as tongue may tell them o'er.
Breathe low her name, my soul; for that means more.

SONNET XXXII.

EQUAL TROTH.

Not by one measure mayst thou mete our love;
For how should I be loved as I love thee?—
I, graceless, joyless, lacking absolutely
All gifts that with thy queenship best behove;—

Thou, throned in every heart's elect alcove,
And crowned with garlands culled from every tree,
Which for no head but thine, by Love's decree,
All beauties and all mysteries interwove.

But here thine eyes and lips yield soft rebuke:—
"Then only" (say'st thou) "could I love thee less,
When thou couldst doubt my love's equality."
Peace, sweet! If not to sum but worth we look,—
Thy heart's transcendence, not my heart's excess,—
Then more a thousandfold thou lov'st than I.

SONNET XXXIII.

VENUS VICTRIX.

Could Juno's self more sovereign presence wear
Than thou, 'mid other ladies throned in grace?—
Or Pallas, when thou bend'st with soul-stilled face
O'er poet's page gold-shadowed in thy hair?
Dost thou than Venus seem less heavenly fair
When o'er the sea of love's tumultuous trance
Hovers thy smile, and mingles with thy glance
That sweet voice like the last wave murmuring there?

Before such triune loveliness divine
Awestruck I ask, which goddess here most claims
The prize that, howsoe'er adjudged, is thine?
Then Love breathes low the sweetest of thy names;
And Venus Victrix to my heart doth bring
Herself, the Helen of her guerdoning.

SONNET XXXIV.

THE DARK GLASS.

Not I myself know all my love for thee:
How should I reach so far, who cannot weigh
To-morrow's dower by gage of yesterday?
Shall birth and death, and all dark names that be

As doors and windows bared to some loud sea,
  Lash deaf mine ears and blind my face with spray;
  And shall my sense pierce love,—the last relay
And ultimate outpost of eternity?

Lo! what am I to Love, the lord of all?
  One murmuring shell he gathers from the sand,—
  One little heart-flame sheltered in his hand.
Yet through thine eyes he grants me clearest call
And variest touch of powers primordial
  That any hour-girt life may understand.

SONNET XXXV.

THE LAMP'S SHRINE.

Sometimes I fain would find in thee some fault,
  That I might love thee still in spite of it:
  Yet how should our Lord Love curtail one whit
Thy perfect praise whom most he would exalt?
Alas! he can but make my heart's low vault
  Even in men's sight unworthier, being lit
  By thee, who thereby show'st more exquisite
Like fiery chrysoprase in deep basalt.

Yet will I nowise shrink; but at Love's shrine
  Myself within the beams his brow doth dart
  Will set the flashing jewel of thy heart
In that dull chamber where it deigns to shine:
For lo! in honor of thine excellencies
My heart takes pride to show how poor it is.

SONNET XXXVI.

LIFE-IN-LOVE.

Not in thy body is thy life at all,
  But in this lady's lips and hands and eyes;
  Through these she yields thee life that vivifies
What else were sorrow's servant and death's thrall.

Look on thyself without her, and recall
  The waste remembrance and forlorn surmise
  That lived but in a dead-drawn breath of sighs
O'er vanished hours and hours eventual.

Even so much life hath the poor tress of hair
  Which, stored apart, is all love hath to show
  For heart-beats and for fire-heats long ago ;
Even so much life endures unknown, even where,
'Mid change the changeless night environeth,
Lies all that golden hair undimmed in death.

SONNET XXXVII.

THE LOVE-MOON.

"When that dead face, bowered in the furthest years,
  Which once was all the life years held for thee,
  Can now scarce bid the tides of memory
Cast on thy soul a little spray of tears,—
How canst thou gaze into these eyes of hers
  Whom now thy heart delights in, and not see
  Within each orb Love's philtred euphrasy
Make them of buried troth remembrancers ?"

"Nay, pitiful Love, nay, loving Pity ! Well
  Thou knowest that in these twain I have confess'd
Two very voices of thy summoning bell.
  Nay, Master, shall not Death make manifest
In these the culminant changes which approve
The love-moon that must light my soul to Love ?"

SONNET XXXVIII.

THE MORROW'S MESSAGE.

"Thou Ghost," I said, "and is thy name To-day ?—
  Yesterday's son, with such an abject brow !—
  And can To-morrow be more pale than thou ?"
While yet I spoke, the silence answered : "Yea,

Henceforth our issue is all grieved and gray,
And each beforehand makes such poor avow
As of old leaves beneath the budding bough
Or night-drift that the sundawn shreds away."

Then cried I: "Mother of many malisons,
O Earth, receive me to thy dusty bed!"
But therewithal the tremulous silence said:
"Lo! Love yet bids thy lady greet thee once:—
Yea, twice,—whereby thy life is still the sun's;
And thrice,—whereby the shadow of death is dead."

SONNET XXXIX.

SLEEPLESS DREAMS.

Girt in dark growths, yet glimmering with one star,
O night desirous as the nights of youth!
Why should my heart within thy spell, forsooth,
Now beat, as the bride's finger-pulses are
Quickened within the girdling golden bar?
What wings are these that fan my pillow smooth?
And why does Sleep, waved back by Joy and Ruth,
Tread softly round and gaze at me from far?

Nay, night deep-leaved! And would Love feign in thee
Some shadowy palpitating grove that bears
Rest for man's eyes and music for his ears?
O lonely night! art thou not known to me,
A thicket hung with masks of mockery
And watered with the wasteful warmth of tears?

SONNET XL.

SEVERED SELVES.

Two separate divided silences,
Which, brought together, would find loving voice;
Two glances which together would rejoice
In love, now lost like stars beyond dark trees;

Two hands apart whose touch alone gives ease ;
  Two bosoms which, heart-shrined with mutual flame,
  Would, meeting in one clasp, be made the same ;
Two souls, the shores wave-mocked of sundering seas :—

Such are we now. Ah ! may our hope forecast
  Indeed one hour again, when on this stream
  Of darkened love once more the light shall gleam ?—
An hour how slow to come, how quickly past,—
Which blooms and fades, and only leaves at last,
  Faint as shed flowers, the attenuated dream.

SONNET XLI.

THROUGH DEATH TO LOVE.

Like labor-laden moonclouds faint to flee
  From winds that sweep the winter-bitten wold,—
  Like multiform circumfluence manifold
Of night's flood-tide,—like terrors that agree
Of hoarse-tongued fire and inarticulate sea,—
  Even such, within some glass dimmed by our breath,
  Our hearts discern wild images of Death,
Shadows and shoals that edge eternity.

Howbeit athwart Death's imminent shade doth soar
  One Power, than flow of stream or flight of dove
  Sweeter to glide around, to brood above.
Tell me, my heart,—what angel-greeted door
Or threshold of wing-winnowed threshing-floor
  Hath guest fire-fledged as thine, whose lord is Love ?

SONNET XLII.

HOPE OVERTAKEN.

I deemed thy garments, O my Hope, were gray,
  So far I viewed thee. Now the space between
  Is passed at length ; and garmented in green
Even as in days of yore thou stand'st to-day.

Ah God ! and but for lingering dull dismay,
  On all that road our footsteps erst had been
  Even thus commingled, and our shadows seen
Blent on the hedgerows and the water-way.

O Hope of mine whose eyes are living love,
  No eyes but hers,—O Love and Hope the same !—
    Lean close to me, for now the sinking sun
That warmed our feet scarce gilds our hair above.
  O hers thy voice and very hers thy name !
    Alas, cling round me, for the day is done !

SONNET XLIII.

LOVE AND HOPE.

Bless love and hope. Full many a withered year
  Whirled past us, eddying to its chill doomsday ;
  And clasped together where the blown leaves lay
We long have knelt and wept full many a tear.
Yet lo ! one hour at last, the Spring's compeer,
  Flutes softly to us from some green byway :
  Those years, those tears are dead, but only they :—
Bless love and hope, true soul ; for we are here.

Cling heart to heart ; nor of this hour demand
  Whether in very truth, when we are dead,
  Our hearts shall wake to know Love's golden head
Sole sunshine of the imperishable land ;
Or but discern, through night's unfeatured scope,
Scorn-fired at length the illusive eyes of Hope.

SONNET XLIV.

CLOUD AND WIND.

Love, should I fear death most for you or me ?
  Yet if you die, can I not follow you,
  Forcing the straits of change ? Alas ! but who
Shall wrest a bond from night's inveteracy,

Ere yet my hazardous soul put forth, to be
  Her warrant against all her haste might rue ?—
  Ah ! in your eyes so reached what dumb adieu,
What unsunned gyres of waste eternity ?

And if I die the first, shall death be then
  A lampless watchtower whence I see you weep ?—
  Or (woe is me !) a bed wherein my sleep
Ne'er notes (as death's dear cup at last you drain)
The hour when you too learn that all is vain
  And that Hope sows what Love shall never reap ?

SONNET XLV.

SECRET PARTING.

Because our talk was of the cloud-control
  And moon-track of the journeying face of Fate,
  Her tremulous kisses faltered at love's gate
And her eyes dreamed against a distant goal :
But soon, remembering her how brief the whole
  Of joy, which its own hours annihilate,
  Her set gaze gathered, thirstier than of late,
And as she kissed, her mouth became her soul.

Thence in what ways we wandered, and how strove
  To build with fire-tried vows the piteous home
  Which memory haunts and whither sleep may roam,—
They only know for whom the roof of Love
Is the still-seated secret of the grove,
  Nor spire may rise nor bell be heard therefrom.

SONNET XLVI.

PARTED LOVE.

What shall be said of this embattled day
  And armèd occupation of this night
  By all thy foes beleaguered,—now when sight
Nor sound denotes the loved one far away ?

Of these thy vanquished hours what shalt thou say,—
As every sense to which she dealt delight
Now labors lonely o'er the stark noon-height
To reach the sunset's desolate disarray?

Stand still, fond fettered wretch! while Memory's art
Parades the Past before thy face, and lures
Thy spirit to her passionate portraitures:
Till the tempestuous tide-gates flung apart
Flood with wild will the hollows of thy heart,
And thy heart rends thee, and thy body endures.

SONNET XLVII.

BROKEN MUSIC.

The mother will not turn, who thinks she hears
Her nursling's speech first grow articulate;
But breathless with averted eyes elate
She sits, with open lips and open ears,
That it may call her twice. 'Mid doubts and fears
Thus oft my soul has hearkened; till the song,
A central moan for days, at length found tongue,
And the sweet music welled and the sweet tears.

But now, whatever while the soul is fain
To list that wonted murmur, as it were
The speech-bound sea-shell's low importunate strain,—
No breath of song, thy voice alone is there,
O bitterly beloved! and all her gain
Is but the pang of unpermitted prayer.

SONNET XLVIII.

DEATH-IN-LOVE.

There came an image in Life's retinue
That had Love's wings and bore his gonfalon:
Fair was the web, and nobly wrought thereon,
O soul-sequestered face, thy form and hue!

Bewildering sounds, such as Spring wakens to,
Shook in its folds; and through my heart its power
Sped trackless as the immemorable hour
When birth's dark portal groaned and all was new.

But a veiled woman followed, and she caught
The banner round its staff, to furl and cling,—
Then plucked a feather from the bearer's wing,
And held it to his lips that stirred it not,
And said to me, "Behold, there is no breath:
I and this Love are one, and I am Death."

SONNETS XLIX, L, LI, LII.

WILLOWWOOD.

I.

I SAT with Love upon a woodside well,
Leaning across the water, I and he;
Nor ever did he speak nor looked at me,
But touched his lute wherein was audible
The certain secret thing he had to tell:
Only our mirrored eyes met silently
In the low wave; and that sound came to be
The passionate voice I knew; and my tears fell.

And at their fall, his eyes beneath grew hers;
And with his foot and with his wing-feathers
He swept the spring that watered my heart's drouth
Then the dark ripples spread to waving hair,
And as I stooped, her own lips rising there
Bubbled with brimming kisses at my mouth.

II.

AND now Love sang: but his was such a song
So meshed with half-remembrance hard to free,
As souls disused in death's sterility
May sing when the new birthday tarries long,

And I was made aware of a dumb throng
That stood aloof, one form by every tree,
All mournful forms, for each was I or she,
The shades of those our days that had no tongue.

They looked on us, and knew us and were known;
While fast together, alive from the abyss,
Clung the soul-wrung implacable close kiss;
And pity of self through all made broken moan
Which said, "For once, for once, for once alone!"
And still Love sang, and what he sang was this:—

III.

"O YE, all ye that walk in Willowwood,
That walk with hollow faces burning white;
What fathom-depth of soul-struck widowhood,
What long, what longer hours, one lifelong night,
Ere ye again, who so in vain have wooed
Your last hope lost, who so in vain invite
Your lips to that their unforgotten food,
Ere ye, ere ye again shall see the light!

Alas! the bitter banks in Willowwood,
With tear-spurge wan, with blood-wort burning red:
Alas! if ever such a pillow could
Steep deep the soul in sleep till she were dead,—
Better all life forget her than this thing,
That Willowwood should hold her wandering!"

IV.

So sang he: and as meeting rose and rose
Together cling through the wind's wellaway
Nor change at once, yet near the end of day
The leaves drop loosened where the heart-stain glows,

So when the song died did the kiss unclose ;
And her face fell back drowned, and was as gray
As its gray eyes ; and if it ever may
Meet mine again I know not if Love knows.

Only I know that I leaned low and drank
A long draught from the water where she sank,
Her breath and all her tears and all her soul :
And as I leaned, I know I felt Love's face
Pressed on my neck with moan of pity and grace,
Till both our heads were in his aureole.

SONNET LIII.

WITHOUT HER.

What of her glass without her ? The blank gray
There where the pool is blind of the moon's face.
Her dress without her ? The tossed empty space
Of cloud-rack whence the moon has passed away.
Her paths without her ? Day's appointed sway
Usurped by desolate night. Her pillowed place
Without her ? Tears, ah me ! for love's good grace,
And cold forgetfulness of night or day.

What of the heart without her ? Nay, poor heart,
Of thee what word remains ere speech be still ?
A wayfarer by barren ways and chill,
Steep ways and weary, without her thou art,
Where the long cloud, the long wood's counterpart,
Sheds doubled darkness up the laboring hill.

SONNET LIV.

LOVE'S FATALITY.

Sweet Love,—but oh ! most dread Desire of Love
Life-thwarted. Linked in gyves I saw them stand,
Love shackled with Vain-longing, hand to hand :
And one was eyed as the blue vault above :

But hope tempestuous like a fire-cloud hove
I' the other's gaze, even as in his whose wand
Vainly all night with spell-wrought power has spann'd
The unyielding caves of some deep treasure-trove.

Also his lips, two writhen flakes of flame,
Made moan: "Alas, O Love, thus leashed with me!
Wing-footed thou, wing-shouldered, once born free:
And I, thy cowering self, in chains grown tame,—
Bound to thy body and soul, named with thy name,—
Life's iron heart, even Love's Fatality."

SONNET LV.

STILLBORN LOVE.

The hour which might have been yet might not be,
Which man's and woman's heart conceived and bore
Yet whereof life was barren,—on what shore
Bides it the breaking of Time's weary sea?
Bondchild of all consummate joys set free,
It somewhere sighs and serves, and mute before
The house of Love, hears through the echoing door
His hours elect in choral consonancy.

But lo! what wedded souls now hand in hand
Together tread at last the immortal strand
With eyes where burning memory lights love home?
Lo! how the little outcast hour has turned
And leaped to them and in their faces yearned:—
"I am your child: O parents, ye have come!"

SONNETS LVI, LVII, LVIII.

TRUE WOMAN.

I. HERSELF.

To be a sweetness more desired than Spring;
A bodily beauty more acceptable
Than the wild rose-tree's arch that crowns the fell;
To be an essence more environing

Than wine's drained juice ; a music ravishing
More than the passionate pulse of Philomel ;—
To be all this 'neath one soft bosom's swell
That is the flower of life :—how strange a thing !

How strange a thing to be what Man can know
But as a sacred secret ! Heaven's own screen
Hides her soul's purest depth and loveliest glow ;
Closely withheld, as all things most unseen,—
The wave-bowered pearl,—the heart-shaped seal of green
That flecks the snowdrop underneath the snow.

II. HER LOVE.

She loves him ; for her infinite soul is Love,
And he her lodestar. Passion in her is
A glass facing his fire, where the bright bliss
Is mirrored, and the heat returned. Yet move
That glass, a stranger's amorous flame to prove,
And it shall turn, by instant contraries,
Ice to the moon ; while her pure fire to his
For whom it burns, clings close i' the heart's alcove.

Lo ! they are one. With wifely breast to breast
And circling arms, she welcomes all command
Of love,—her soul to answering ardors fann'd :
Yet as morn springs or twilight sinks to rest,
Ah ! who shall say she deems not loveliest
The hour of sisterly sweet hand-in-hand ?

III. HER HEAVEN.

If to grow old in Heaven is to grow young,
(As the Seer saw and said,) then blest were he
With youth for evermore, whose heaven should be
True Woman, she whom these weak notes have sung,

Here and hereafter,—choir-strains of her tongue,—
  Sky-spaces of her eyes,—sweet signs that flee
  About her soul's immediate sanctuary,—
Were Paradise all uttermost worlds among.

The sunrise blooms and withers on the hill
  Like any hillflower ; and the noblest troth
  Dies here to dust. Yet shall Heaven's promise clothe
Even yet those lovers who have cherished still
This test for love :—in every kiss sealed fast
To feel the first kiss and forebode the last.

SONNET LIX.

LOVE'S LAST GIFT.

Love to his singer held a glistening leaf,
  And said : "The rose-tree and the apple-tree
  Have fruits to vaunt or flowers to lure the bee ;
And golden shafts are in the feathered sheaf
Of the great harvest-marshal, the year's chief,
  Victorious Summer ; aye, and 'neath warm sea
  Strange secret grasses lurk inviolably
Between the filtering channels of sunk reef.

All are my blooms ; and all sweet blooms of love
  To thee I gave while Spring and Summer sang ;
  But Autumn stops to listen, with some pang
From those worse things the wind is moaning of.
Only this laurel dreads no winter days :
Take my last gift ; thy heart hath sung my praise."

Part II.—*CHANGE AND FATE.*

SONNET LX.

TRANSFIGURED LIFE.

As growth of form or momentary glance
  In a child's features will recall to mind
  The father's with the mother's face combin'd,—
Sweet interchange that memories still enhance :
And yet, as childhood's years and youth's advance,
  The gradual mouldings leave one stamp behind,
  Till in the blended likeness now we find
A separate man's or woman's countenance :—

So in the song, the singer's Joy and Pain,
  Its very parents, evermore expand
To bid the passion's fullgrown birth remain,
  By Art's transfiguring essence subtly spann'd ;
  And from that song-cloud shaped as a man's hand
There comes the sound as of abundant rain.

SONNET LXI.

THE SONG-THROE.

By thine own tears thy song must tears beget,
  O Singer ! Magic mirror thou hast none
  Except thy manifest heart ; and save thine own
Anguish or ardor, else no amulet.
Cisterned in pride, verse is the feathery jet
  Of soulless air-flung fountains ; nay, more dry
  Than the Dead Sea for throats that thirst and sigh,
That song o'er which no singer's lids grew wet.

The Song-god—He the Sun-god—is no slave
Of thine : thy Hunter he, who for thy soul
Fledges his shaft : to no august control
Of thy skilled hand his quivering store he gave :
But if thy lips' loud cry leap to his smart,
The inspir'd recoil shall pierce thy brother's heart.

SONNET LXII.

THE SOUL'S SPHERE.

Some prisoned moon in steep cloud-fastnesses,—
Throned queen and thralled ; some dying sun whose pyre
Blazed with momentous memorable fire ;—
Who hath not yearned and fed his heart with these ?
Who, sleepless, hath not anguished to appease
Tragical shadow's realm of sound and sight
Conjectured in the lamentable night ? . . . . .
Lo ! the soul's sphere of infinite images !

What sense shall count them ? Whether it forecast
The rose-winged hours that flutter in the van
Of Love's unquestioning unrevealèd span,—
Visions of golden futures : or that last
Wild pageant of the accumulated past
That clangs and flashes for a drowning man.

SONNET LXIII.

INCLUSIVENESS.

The changing guests, each in a different mood,
Sit at the roadside table and arise :
And every life among them in likewise
Is a soul's board set daily with new food.

What man has bent o'er his son's sleep, to brood
  How that face shall watch his when cold it lies?—
  Or thought, as his own mother kissed his eyes,
Of what her kiss was when his father wooed?

May not this ancient room thou sitt'st in dwell
  In separate living souls for joy or pain?
  Nay, all its corners may be painted plain
Where Heaven shows pictures of some life spent well,
  And may be stamped, a memory all in vain,
Upon the sight of lidless eyes in Hell.

SONNET LXIV.

ARDOR AND MEMORY.

The cuckoo-throb, the heartbeat of the Spring;
  The rosebud's blush that leaves it as it grows
  Into the full-eyed fair unblushing rose;
The summer clouds that visit every wing
With fires of sunrise and of sunsetting;
  The furtive flickering streams to light re-born
  'Mid airs new-fledged and valorous lusts of morn,
While all the daughters of the daybreak sing:—

These ardor loves, and memory: and when flown
  All joys, and through dark forest-boughs in flight
  The wind swoops onward brandishing the light,
Even yet the rose-tree's verdure left alone
Will flush all ruddy though the rose be gone;
  With ditties and with dirges infinite.

SONNET LXV.

KNOWN IN VAIN.

As two whose love, first foolish, widening scope,
  Knows suddenly, to music high and soft,
  The Holy of holies; who because they scoff'd
Are now amazed with shame, nor dare to cope

With the whole truth aloud, lest heaven should ope ;
  Yet, at their meetings, laugh not as they laugh'd
  In speech ; nor speak, at length ; but sitting oft
Together, within hopeless sight of hope
For hours are silent :—So it happeneth
  When Work and Will awake too late, to gaze
After their life sailed by, and hold their breath.
  Ah ! who shall dare to search through what sad maze
  Thenceforth their incommunicable ways
Follow the desultory foot of Death ?

SONNET LXVI.

THE HEART OF THE NIGHT.

From child to youth ; from youth to arduous man ;
  From lethargy to fever of the heart ;
  From faithful life to dream-dowered days apart ;
From trust to doubt ; from doubt to brink of ban ;—
Thus much of change in one swift cycle ran
  Till now. Alas, the soul !—how soon must she
  Accept her primal immortality,—
The flesh resume its dust whence it began ?

O Lord of work and peace ! O Lord of life !
  O Lord, the awful Lord of will ! though late,
    Even yet renew this soul with duteous breath.
That when the peace is garnered in from strife,
  The work retrieved, the will regenerate,
    This soul may see thy face, O Lord of death !

SONNET LXVII.

THE LANDMARK.

Was *that* the landmark ? What,—the foolish well
  Whose wave, low down, I did not stoop to drink,
  But sat and flung the pebbles from its brink
In sport to send its imaged skies pell-mell,

(And mine own image, had I noted well!)—
Was that my point of turning?—I had thought
The stations of my course should rise unsought,
As altar-stone or ensigned citadel.

But lo! the path is missed, I must go back,
And thirst to drink when next I reach the spring
Which once I stained, which since may have grown black.
Yet though no light be left nor bird now sing
As here I turn, I'll thank God, hastening,
That the same goal is still on the same track.

SONNET LXVIII.

A DARK DAY.

The gloom that breathes upon me with these airs
Is like the drops which strike the traveller's brow
Who knows not, darkling, if they bring him now
Fresh storm, or be old rain the covert bears.
Ah! bodes this hour some harvest of new tares,
Or hath but memory of the day whose plough
Sowed hunger once,—the night at length when thou,
O prayer found vain, didst fall from out my prayers?

How prickly were the growths which yet how smooth,
Along the hedgerows of this journey shed,
Lie by Time's grace till night and sleep may soothe!
Even as the thistledown from pathsides dead
Gleaned by a girl in autumns of her youth,
Which one new year makes soft her marriage-bed.

SONNET LXIX.

AUTUMN IDLENESS.

This sunlight shames November where he grieves
In dead red leaves, and will not let him shun
The day, though bough with bough be over-run.
But with a blessing every glade receives

High salutation ; while from hillock-eaves
The deer gaze calling, dappled white and dun,
As if, being foresters of old, the sun
Had marked them with the shade of forest-leaves.

Here dawn to-day unveiled her magic glass ;
Here noon now gives the thirst and takes the dew ;
Till eve bring rest when other good things pass.
And here the lost hours the lost hours renew
While I still lead my shadow o'er the grass,
Nor know, for longing, that which I should do.

SONNET LXX.

THE HILL SUMMIT.

This feast-day of the sun, his altar there
In the broad west has blazed for vesper-song ;
And I have loitered in the vale too long
And gaze now a belated worshipper.
Yet may I not forget that I was 'ware,
So journeying, of his face at intervals
Transfigured where the fringed horizon falls,—
A fiery bush with coruscating hair.

And now that I have climbed and won this height,
I must tread downward through the sloping shade
And travel the bewildered tracks till night.
Yet for this hour I still may here be stayed
And see the gold air and the silver fade
And the last bird fly into the last light.

SONNETS LXXI, LXXII, LXXIII.

THE CHOICE.

I.

Eat thou and drink ; to-morrow thou shalt die.
Surely the earth, that's wise being very old,
Needs not our help. Then loose me, love, and hold
Thy sultry hair up from my face ; that I

May pour for thee this golden wine, brim-high,
Till round the glass thy fingers glow like gold.
We'll drown all hours : thy song, while hours are toll'd,
Shall leap, as fountains veil the changing sky.

Now kiss, and think that there are really those,
My own high-bosomed beauty, who increase
Vain gold, vain lore, and yet might choose our way !
Through many years they toil ; then on a day
They die not,—for their life was death,—but cease ;
And round their narrow lips the mould falls close.

II.

Watch thou and fear ; to-morrow thou shalt die.
Or art thou sure thou shalt have time for death ?
Is not the day which God's word promiseth
To come man knows not when ? In yonder sky,
Now while we speak, the sun speeds forth : can I
Or thou assure him of his goal ? God's breath
Even at this moment haply quickeneth
The air to a flame ; till spirits, always nigh
Though screened and hid, shall walk the daylight here.
And dost thou prate of all that man shall do ?
Canst thou, who hast but plagues, presume to be
Glad in his gladness that comes after thee ?
Will *his* strength slay *thy* worm in Hell ? Go to :
Cover thy countenance, and watch, and fear.

III.

Think thou and act ; to-morrow thou shalt die.
Outstretched in the sun's warmth upon the shore,
Thou say'st : "Man's measured path is all gone o'er :
Up all his years, steeply, with strain and sigh,
Man clomb until he touched the truth ; and I,
Even I, am he whom it was destined for."
How should this be ? Art thou then so much more
Than they who sowed, that thou shouldst reap thereby ?

Nay, come up hither. From this wave-washed mound
Unto the furthest flood-brim look with me ;
Then reach on with thy thought till it be drown'd.
Miles and miles distant though the last line be,
And though thy soul sail leagues and leagues beyond,—
Still, leagues beyond those leagues, there is more sea.

SONNETS LXXIV, LXXV, LXXVI.

OLD AND NEW ART.

I. ST. LUKE THE PAINTER.

Give honor unto Luke Evangelist ;
For he it was (the aged legends say)
Who first taught Art to fold her hands and pray.
Scarcely at once she dared to rend the mist
Of devious symbols : but soon having wist
How sky-breadth and field-silence and this day
Are symbols also in some deeper way.
She looked through these to God and was God's priest.

And if, past noon, her toil began to irk,
And she sought talismans, and turned in vain
To soulless self-reflections of man's skill,—
Yet now, in this the twilight, she might still
Kneel in the latter grass to pray again,
Ere the night cometh and she may not work.

II. NOT AS THESE.

"I am not as these are," the poet saith
In youth's pride, and the painter, among men
At bay, where never pencil comes nor pen,
And shut about with his own frozen breath.
To others, for whom only rhyme wins faith
As poets,—only paint as painters,—then
He turns in the cold silence ; and again
Shrinking, "I am not as these are," he saith.

And say that this is so, what follows it?
For were thine eyes set backwards in thine head,
Such words were well; but they see on, and far.
Unto the lights of the great Past, new-lit
Fair for the Future's track, look thou instead,—
Say thou instead, "I am not as *these* are."

III. THE HUSBANDMEN.

Though God, as one that is an householder,
Called these to labor in His vineyard first,
Before the husk of darkness was well burst
Bidding them grope their way out and bestir,
(Who, questioned of their wages, answered, "Sir,
Unto each man a penny":) though the worst
Burthen of heat was theirs and the dry thirst:
Though God has since found none such as these were
To do their work like them:—Because of this
Stand not ye idle in the market-place.
Which of ye knoweth *he* is not that last
Who may be first by faith and will?—yea, his
The hand which after the appointed days
And hours shall give a Future to their Past?

SONNET LXXVII.

SOUL'S BEAUTY.*

Under the arch of Life, where love and death,
Terror and mystery, guard her shrine, I saw
Beauty enthroned; and though her gaze struck awe,
I drew it in as simply as my breath.

* Soul's Beauty and Body's Beauty.—These two sonnets were written respectively for Rossetti's pictures entitled *Sibylla Palmifera* and *Lilith*. They might therefore, if he had not himself embodied them in *The House of Life*, have appeared appropriately in the section of the present book named *Sonnets and Verses for Rossetti's own Works of Art*.

Hers are the eyes which, over and beneath,
The sky and sea bend on thee,—which can draw,
By sea or sky or woman, to one law,
The allotted bondman of her palm and wreath.

This is that Lady Beauty, in whose praise
Thy voice and hand shake still,—long known to thee
By flying hair and fluttering hem,—the beat
Following her daily of thy heart and feet,
How passionately and irretrievably,
In what fond flight, how many ways and days!

SONNET LXXVIII.

BODY'S BEAUTY.

Of Adam's first wife, Lilith, it is told
(The witch he loved before the gift of Eve,)
That, ere the snake's, her sweet tongue could deceive,
And her enchanted hair was the first gold.
And still she sits, young while the earth is old,
And, subtly of herself contemplative,
Draws men to watch the bright web she can weave,
Till heart and body and life are in its hold.

The rose and poppy are her flowers; for where
Is he not found, O Lilith, whom shed scent
And soft-shed kisses and soft sleep shall snare?
Lo! as that youth's eyes burned at thine, so went
Thy spell through him, and left his straight neck bent
And round his heart one strangling golden hair.

SONNET LXXIX.

THE MONOCHORD.

Is it this sky's vast vault or ocean's sound
That is Life's self and draws my life from me,
And by instinct ineffable decree
Holds my breath quailing on the bitter bound?

Nay, is it Life or Death, thus thunder-crown'd,
That 'mid the tide of all emergency
Now notes my separate wave, and to what sea
Its difficult eddies labor in the ground?

Oh! what is this that knows the road I came,
The flame turned cloud, the cloud returned to flame,
The lifted shifted steeps and all the way?—
That draws round me at last this wind-warm space,
And in regenerate rapture turns my face
Upon the devious coverts of dismay?

SONNET LXXX.

FROM DAWN TO NOON.

As the child knows not if his mother's face
Be fair; nor of his elders yet can deem
What each most is; but as of hill or stream
At dawn, all glimmering life surrounds his place:
Who yet, tow'rd noon of his half-weary race,
Pausing awhile beneath the high sun-beam
And gazing steadily back,—as through a dream,
In things long past new features now can trace:—

Even so the thought that is at length fullgrown
Turns back to note the sun-smit paths, all gray
And marvellous once, where first it walked alone;
And haply doubts, amid the unblenching day,
Which most or least impelled its onward way,—
Those unknown things or these things overknown.

SONNET LXXXI.

MEMORIAL THRESHOLDS.

What place so strange,—though unrevealèd snow
With unimaginable fires arise
At the earth's end,—what passion of surprise
Like frost-bound fire-girt scenes of long ago?

Lo! this is none but I this hour; and lo!
  This is the very place which to mine eyes
Those mortal hours in vain immortalize,
'Mid hurrying crowds, with what alone I know.

City, of thine a single simple door,
  By some new Power reduplicate, must be
  Even yet my life-porch in eternity,
Even with one presence filled, as once of yore:
Or mocking winds whirl round a chaff-strown floor
  Thee and thy years and these my words and me.

SONNET LXXXII.

HOARDED JOY.

I SAID: "Nay, pluck not,—let the first fruit be:
  Even as thou sayest, it is sweet and red,
  But let it ripen still. The tree's bent head
Sees in the stream its own fecundity
And bides the day of fulness. Shall not we
  At the sun's hour that day possess the shade,
  And claim our fruit before its ripeness fade,
And eat it from the branch and praise the tree?"

I say: "Alas! our fruit hath wooed the sun
  Too long,—'tis fallen and floats adown the stream.
Lo, the last clusters! Pluck them every one,
  And let us sup with summer; ere the gleam
Of autumn set the year's pent sorrow free,
And the woods wail like echoes from the sea."

SONNET LXXXIII.

BARREN SPRING.

ONCE more the changed year's turning wheel returns:
  And as a girl sails balanced in the wind,
  And now before and now again behind
Stoops as it swoops, with cheek that laughs and burns,

So Spring comes merry towards me here, but earns
No answering smile from me, whose life is twin'd
With the dead boughs that winter still must bind,
And whom to-day the Spring no more concerns.

Behold, this crocus is a withering flame;
This snowdrop, snow; this apple-blossom's part
To breed the fruit that breeds the serpent's art.
Nay, for these Spring-flowers, turn thy face from them,
Nor stay till on the year's last lily-stem
The white cup shrivels round the golden heart.

SONNET LXXXIV.

FAREWELL TO THE GLEN.

SWEET stream-fed glen, why say "farewell" to thee
Who far'st so well and find'st for ever smooth
The brow of Time where man may read no ruth?
Nay, do thou rather say "farewell" to me,
Who now fare forth in bitter fantasy
Than erst was mine where other shade might soothe
By other streams, what while in fragrant youth
The bliss of being sad made melancholy.

And yet, farewell! For better shalt thou fare
When children bathe sweet faces in thy flow
And happy lovers blend sweet shadows there
In hours to come, than when an hour ago
Thine echoes had but one man's sighs to bear
And thy trees whispered what he feared to know.

SONNET LXXXV.

VAIN VIRTUES.

WHAT is the sorriest thing that enters Hell?
None of the sins,—but this and that fair deed
Which a soul's sin at length could supersede.
These yet are virgins, whom death's timely knell

Might once have sainted ; whom the fiends compel
Together now, in snake-bound shuddering sheaves
Of anguish, while the pit's pollution leaves
Their refuse maidenhood abominable.

Night sucks them down, the tribute of the pit,
Whose names, half entered in the book of Life,
Were God's desire at noon. And as their hair
And eyes sink last, the Torturer deigns no whit
To gaze, but, yearning, waits his destined wife,
The sin still blithe on earth that sent them there.

SONNET LXXXVI.

LOST DAYS.

The lost days of my life until to-day,
What were they, could I see them on the street
Lie as they fell ? Would they be ears of wheat
Sown once for food but trodden into clay ?
Or golden coins squandered and still to pay ?
Or drops of blood dabbling the guilty feet ?
Or such spilt water as in dreams must cheat
The undying throats of Hell, athirst alway ?

I do not see them here ; but after death
God knows I know the faces I shall see,
Each one a murdered self, with low last breath.
"I am thyself,—what hast thou done to me ?"
"And I—and I—thyself," (lo ! each one saith,)
"And thou thyself to all eternity !"

SONNET LXXXVII.

DEATH'S SONGSTERS.

When first that horse, within whose populous womb
The birth was death, o'ershadowed Troy with fate,
Her elders, dubious of its Grecian freight,
Brought Helen there to sing the songs of home ;

She whispered, "Friends, I am alone; come, come!"
Then, crouched within, Ulysses waxed afraid,
And on his comrades' quivering mouths he laid
His hands, and held them till the voice was dumb.

The same was he who, lashed to his own mast,
There where the sea-flowers screen the charnel-caves,
Beside the sirens' singing island pass'd,
Till sweetness failed along the inveterate waves.
Say, soul,—are Songs of Death no heaven to thee,
Nor shames her lip the cheek of Victory?

SONNET LXXXVIII.

HERO'S LAMP.*

THAT lamp thou fill'st in Eros' name to-night,
O Hero, shall the Sestian augurs take
To-morrow, and for drowned Leander's sake
To Anteros its fireless lip shall plight.
Aye, waft the unspoken vow: yet dawn's first light
On ebbing storm and life twice ebb'd must break;
While 'neath no sunrise, by the Avernian Lake,
Lo where Love walks, Death's pallid neophyte.

That lamp within Anteros' shadowy shrine
Shall stand unlit (for so the gods decree)
Till some one man the happy issue see
Of a life's love, and bid its flame to shine:
Which still may rest unfir'd; for, theirs or thine,
O brother, what brought love to them or thee?

* After the deaths of Leander and of Hero, the signal-lamp was dedicated to Anteros, with the edict that no man should light it unless his love had proved fortunate.

SONNET LXXXIX.

THE TREES OF THE GARDEN.

YE who have passed Death's haggard hills ; and ye
Whom trees that knew your sires shall cease to know
And still stand silent :—is it all a show,—
A wisp that laughs upon the wall ?—decree
Of some inexorable supremacy
Which ever, as man strains his blind surmise
From depth to ominous depth, looks past his eyes,
Sphinx-faced with unabashèd augury ?

Nay, rather question the Earth's self. Invoke
The storm-felled forest-trees moss-grown to-day
Whose roots are hillocks where the children play ;
Or ask the silver sapling 'neath what yoke [wage
Those stars, his spray-crown's clustering gems, shall
Their journey still when his boughs shrink with age.

SONNET XC.

"RETRO ME, SATHANA !"

GET thee behind me. Even as, heavy-curled,
Stooping against the wind, a charioteer
Is snatched from out his chariot by the hair,
So shall Time be ; and as the void car, hurled
Abroad by reinless steeds, even so the world :
Yea, even as chariot-dust upon the air,
It shall be sought and not found anywhere.
Get thee behind me, Satan. Oft unfurled,
Thy perilous wings can beat and break like lath
Much mightiness of men to win thee praise.
Leave these weak feet to tread in narrow ways.
Thou still, upon the broad vine-sheltered path,
Mayst wait the turning of the phials of wrath
For certain years, for certain months and days.

SONNET XCI.

LOST ON BOTH SIDES.

As when two men have loved a woman well,
Each hating each, through Love's and Death's deceit;
Since not for either this stark marriage-sheet
And the long pauses of this wedding-bell;
Yet o'er her grave the night and day dispel
At last their feud forlorn, with cold and heat;
Nor other than dear friends to death may fleet
The two lives left that most of her can tell:—

So separate hopes, which in a soul had wooed
The one same Peace, strove with each other long,
And Peace before their faces perished since:
So through that soul, in restless brotherhood,
They roam together now, and wind among
Its bye-streets, knocking at the dusty inns.

SONNETS XCII, XCIII.

THE SUN'S SHAME.

I.

Beholding youth and hope in mockery caught
From life; and mocking pulses that remain
When the soul's death of bodily death is fain;
Honor unknown, and honor known unsought;
And penury's sedulous self-torturing thought
On gold, whose master therewith buys his bane;
And longed-for woman longing all in vain
For lonely man with love's desire distraught;

And wealth, and strength, and power, and pleasantness,
Given unto bodies of whose souls men say,
None poor and weak, slavish and foul, as they:—
Beholding these things, I behold no less
The blushing morn and blushing eve confess
The shame that loads the intolerable day.

II.

As some true chief of men, bowed down with stress
Of life's disastrous eld, on blossoming youth
May gaze, and murmur with self-pity and ruth,—
"Might I thy fruitless treasure but possess,
Such blessing of mine all coming years should bless;"—
Then sends one sigh forth to the unknown goal,
And bitterly feels breathe against his soul
The hour swift-winged of nearer nothingness:—

Even so the World's gray Soul to the green World
Perchance one hour must cry: "Woe's me, for whom
Inveteracy of ill portends the doom,—
Whose heart's old fire in shadow of shame is furl'd:
While thou even as of yore are journeying,
All soulless now, yet merry with the Spring!"

SONNET XCIV.

MICHELANGELO'S KISS.

Great Michelangelo, with age grown bleak
And uttermost labors, having once o'ersaid
All grievous memories on his long life shed,
This worst regret to one true heart could speak:—
That when, with sorrowing love and reverence meek,
He stooped o'er sweet Colonna's dying bed,
His Muse and dominant Lady, spirit-wed,—
Her hand he kissed, but not her brow or cheek.

O Buonarruoti,—good at Art's fire wheels
To urge her chariot!—even thus the Soul,
Touching at length some sorely-chastened goal,
Earns oftenest but a little: her appeals
Were deep and mute,—lowly her claim. Let be:
What holds for her Death's garner? And for thee?

SONNET XCV.

THE VASE OF LIFE.

AROUND the vase of life at your slow pace
He has not crept, but turned it with his hands,
And all its sides already understands.
There, girt, one breathes alert for some great race;
Whose road runs far by sands and fruitful space;
Who laughs, yet through the jolly throng has passed;
Who weeps, nor stays for weeping; who at last,
A youth, stands somewhere crowned, with silent face.

And he has filled his vase with wine for blood,
With blood for tears, with spice for burning vow,
With watered flowers for buried love most fit;
And would have cast it shattered to the flood,
Yet in Fate's name has kept it whole; which now
Stands empty till his ashes fall in it.

SONNET XCVI.

LIFE THE BELOVED.

As thy friend's face, with shadow of soul o'erspread,
Somewhile unto thy sight perchance hath been
Ghastly and strange, yet never so is seen
In thought, but to all fortunate favor wed;
As thy love's death-bound features never dead
To memory's glass return, but contravene
Frail fugitive days, and always keep, I ween,
Than all new life a livelier lovelihead:—

So Life herself, thy spirit's friend and love,
Even still as Spring's authentic harbinger
Glows with fresh hours for hope to glorify;
Though pale she lay when in the winter grove
Her funeral flowers were snow-flakes shed on her
And the red wings of frost-fire rent the sky.

SONNET XCVII.

A SUPERSCRIPTION.

Look in my face ; my name is Might-have-been ;
I am also called No-more, Too-late, Farewell ;
Unto thine ear I hold the dead-sea shell
Cast up thy Life's foam-fretted feet between ;
Unto thine eyes the glass where that is seen
Which had Life's form and Love's, but by my spell
Is now a shaken shadow intolerable,
Of ultimate things unuttered the frail screen.

Mark me, how still I am ! But should there dart
One moment through thy soul the soft surprise
Of that winged Peace which lulls the breath of sighs,—
Then shalt thou see me smile, and turn apart
Thy visage to mine ambush at thy heart
Sleepless with cold commemorative eyes.

SONNET XCVIII.

HE AND I.

Whence came his feet into my field, and why ?
How is it that he sees it all so drear ?
How do I see his seeing, and how hear
The name his bitter silence knows it by ?
This was the little fold of separate sky
Whose pasturing clouds in the soul's atmosphere
Drew living light from one continual year :
How should he find it lifeless ? He, or I ?

Lo ! this new Self now wanders round my field
With plaints for every flower, and for each tree
A moan, the sighing wind's auxiliary :
And o'er sweet waters of my life, that yield
Unto his lips no draught but tears unseal'd,
Even in my place he weeps. Even I, not he.

SONNETS XCIX, C.

NEWBORN DEATH.

I.

To-day Death seems to me an infant child
Which her worn mother Life upon my knee
Has set to grow my friend and play with me;
If haply so my heart might be beguil'd
To find no terrors in a face so mild,—
If haply so my weary heart might be
Unto the new born milky eyes of thee,
O Death, before resentment reconcil'd.

How long, O Death? And shall thy feet depart
Still a young child's with mine, or wilt thou stand
Fullgrown the helpful daughter of my heart,
What time with thee indeed I reach the strand
Of the pale wave which knows thee what thou art,
And drink it in the hollow of thy hand?

II.

And thou, O Life, the lady of all bliss,
With whom, when our first heart beat full and fast,
I wandered till the haunts of men were pass'd,
And in fair places found all bowers amiss
Till only woods and waves might hear our kiss,
While to the winds all thought of Death we cast:—
Ah, Life! and must I have from thee at last
No smile to greet me and no babe but this?

Lo! Love, the child once ours; and Song, whose hair
Blew like a flame and blossomed like a wreath;
And Art, whose eyes were worlds by God found fair:
These o'er the book of Nature mixed their breath
With neck-twined arms, as oft we watched them there;
And did these die that thou mightst bear me Death?

SONNET CL.

THE ONE HOPE.

When vain desire at last and vain regret
  Go hand in hand to death, and all is vain,
  What shall assuage the unforgotten pain
And teach the unforgetful to forget?
Shall Peace be still a sunk stream long unmet,—
  Or may the soul at once in a green plain
  Stoop through the spray of some sweet life-fountain
And cull the dew-drenched flowering amulet?

Ah, when the wan soul in that golden air
  Between the scriptured petals softly blown
  Peers breathless for the gift of grace unknown,—
Ah! let none other alien spell soe'er
But only the one Hope's one name be there,—
  Not less nor more, but even that word alone.

II.—MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

MY SISTER'S SLEEP.

She fell asleep on Christmas Eve:
  At length the long-ungranted shade
  Of weary eyelids overweigh'd
The pain nought else might yet relieve.

Our mother, who had leaned all day
  Over the bed from chime to chime,
  Then raised herself for the first time,
And as she sat her down, did pray.

Her little work-table was spread
  With work to finish. For the glare
  Made by her candle, she had care
To work some distance from the bed.

Without, there was a cold moon up,
  Of winter radiance sheer and thin;
  The hollow halo it was in
Was like an icy crystal cup.

Through the small room, with subtle sound
  Of flame, by vents the fireshine drove
  And reddened. In its dim alcove
The mirror shed a clearness round.

I had been sitting up some nights,
And my tired mind felt weak and blank;
Like a sharp strengthening wine it drank
The stillness and the broken lights.

Twelve struck. That sound, by dwindling years
Heard in each hour, crept off; and then
The ruffled silence spread again,
Like water that a pebble stirs.

Our mother rose from where she sat:
Her needles, as she laid them down,
Met lightly, and her silken gown
Settled: no other noise than that.

"Glory unto the Newly Born!"
So, as said angels, she did say,
Because we were in Christmas Day,
Though it would still be long till morn.

Just then in the room over us
There was a pushing back of chairs,
As some who had sat unawares
So late, now heard the hour, and rose.

With anxious softly-stepping haste
Our mother went where Margaret lay,
Fearing the sounds o'erhead—should they
Have broken her long watched-for rest!

She stopped an instant, calm, and turned;
But suddenly turned back again;
And all her features seemed in pain
With woe, and her eyes gazed and yearned.

For my part, I but hid my face,
And held my breath, and spoke no word:
There was none spoken; but I heard
The silence for a little space.

Our mother bowed herself and wept:
And both my arms fell, and I said,
"God knows I knew that she was dead."
And there, all white, my sister slept.

Then kneeling, upon Christmas morn
A little after twelve o'clock,
We said, ere the first quarter struck,
"Christ's blessing on the newly born!"

THE BLESSED DAMOZEL.

THE blessed damozel leaned out
From the gold bar of Heaven;
Her eyes were deeper than the depth
Of waters stilled at even;
She had three lilies in her hand,
And the stars in her hair were seven.

Her robe, ungirt from clasp to hem,
No wrought flowers did adorn,
But a white rose of Mary's gift,
For service meetly worn;
Her hair that lay along her back
Was yellow like ripe corn.

Herseemed she scarce had been a day
One of God's choristers;
The wonder was not yet quite gone
From that still look of hers;
Albeit, to them she left, her day
Had counted as ten years.

(To one, it is ten years of years.
. . . Yet now, and in this place,
Surely she leaned o'er me—her hair
Fell all about my face. . . .
Nothing: the autumn-fall of leaves.
The whole year sets apace.)

It was the rampart of God's house
That she was standing on;
By God built over the sheer depth
The which is Space begun;
So high, that looking downward thence
She scarce could see the sun.

It lies in Heaven, across the flood
Of ether, as a bridge.
Beneath, the tides of day and night
With flame and darkness ridge
The void, as low as where this earth
Spins like a fretful midge.

Around her, lovers, newly met
'Mid deathless love's acclaims,
Spoke evermore among themselves
Their heart-remembered names;
And the souls mounting up to God
Went by her like thin flames.

And still she bowed herself and stooped
  Out of the circling charm ;
Until her bosom must have made
  The bar she leaned on warm
And the lilies lay as if asleep
  Along her bended arm.

From the fixed place of Heaven she saw
  Time like a pulse shake fierce
Through all the worlds. Her gaze still strove
  Within the gulf to pierce
Its path ; and now she spoke as when
  The stars sang in their spheres.

The sun was gone now ; the curled moon
  Was like a little feather
Fluttering far down the gulf ; and now
  She spoke through the still weather.
Her voice was like the voice the stars
  Had when they sang together.

(Ah sweet ! Even now, in that bird's song,
  Strove not her accents there,
Fain to be hearkened ? When those bells
  Possessed the mid-day air,
Strove not her steps to reach my side
  Down all the echoing stair ?)

"I wish that he were come to me,
  For he will come," she said.
"Have I not prayed in Heaven ?—on earth,
  Lord, Lord, has he not pray'd ?
Are not two prayers a perfect strength ?
  And shall I feel afraid ?

"When round his head the aureole clings,
And he is clothed in white,
I'll take his hand and go with him
To the deep wells of light;
As unto a stream we will step down,
And bathe there in God's sight.

"We two will stand beside that shrine,
Occult, withheld, untrod,
Whose lamps are stirred continually
With prayer sent up to God;
And see our old prayers, granted, melt
Each like a little cloud.

"We two will lie i' the shadow of
That living mystic tree
Within whose secret growth the Dove
Is sometimes felt to be,
While every leaf that His plumes touch
Saith His Name audibly.

"And I myself will teach to him,
I myself, lying so,
The songs I sing here; which his voice
Shall pause in, hushed and slow,
And find some knowledge at each pause,
Or some new thing to know."

(Alas! we two, we two, thou say'st!
Yea, one wast thou with me
That once of old. But shall God lift
To endless unity
The soul whose likeness with thy soul
Was but its love for thee?)

"We two," she said, "will seek the groves
Where the lady Mary is,
With her five handmaidens, whose names
Are five sweet symphonies,
Cecily, Gertrude, Magdalen,
Margaret and Rosalys.

"Circlewise sit they, with bound locks
And foreheads garlanded;
Into the fine cloth white like flame
Weaving the golden thread,
To fashion the birth-robes for them
Who are just born, being dead.

"He shall fear, haply, and be dumb:
Then will I lay my cheek
To his, and tell about our love,
Not once abashed or weak:
And the dear Mother will approve
My pride, and let me speak.

"Herself shall bring us, hand in hand,
To Him round whom all souls
Kneel, the clear-ranged unnumbered heads
Bowed with their aureoles:
And angels meeting us shall sing
To their citherns and citoles.

"There will I ask of Christ the Lord
Thus much for him and me:—
Only to live as once on earth
With Love,—only to be,
As then awhile, forever now
Together, I and he."

She gazed and listened and then said,
Less sad of speech than mild,—
"All this is when he comes." She ceased.
The light thrilled towards her, fill'd
With angels in strong level flight.
Her eyes prayed, and she smil'd.

(I saw her smile.) But soon their path
Was vague in distant spheres:
And then she cast her arms along
The golden barriers,
And laid her face between her hands,
And wept. (I heard her tears.)

AT THE SUNRISE IN 1848.

God said, Let there be light; and there was light.
Then heard we sounds as though the Earth did sing
And the Earth's angel cried upon the wing:
We saw priests fall together and turn white:
And covered in the dust from the sun's sight,
A king was spied, and yet another king.
We said: "The round world keeps its balancing;
On this globe, they and we are opposite,—

* My brother never published this sonnet. It is not of his best; yet, as it openly proclaims that he shared the aspirations and exultations of the great year of European revolution, I have thought the personal interest attaching to the sonnet to be such as to entitle it to something better than final oblivion.

If it is day with us, with them 'tis night.
Still, Man, in thy just pride, remember this :—
Thou hadst not made that thy son's sons shall ask
What the word *king* may mean in their day's task,
But for the light that led : and if light is,
It is because God said, Let there be light.

AUTUMN SONG.*

KNOW'ST thou not at the fall of the leaf
How the heart feels a languid grief
Laid on it for a covering,
And how sleep seems a goodly thing
In Autumn at the fall of the leaf ?

And how the swift beat of the brain
Falters because it is in vain,
In Autumn at the fall of the leaf
Knowest thou not ? and how the chief
Of joys seems—not to suffer pain ?

* This lyric was set to music by Mr. Dannreuther during my brother's lifetime, and was published in that form—though not otherwise. I have therefore felt no hesitation in including it among his collected works. As to the next following lyric, THE LADY'S LAMENT, which had hitherto been wholly unpublished, I did hesitate; but I finally admitted it, as being a somewhat marked performance of its class. The class is the same as with the *Autumn Song* ; each being the utterance of a dreamy or indeed morbid mood of desolation to which the youth of our modern generations is prone.

Knows't thou not at the fall of the leaf
How the soul feels like a dried sheaf
Bound up at length for harvesting,
And how death seems a comely thing
In Autumn at the fall of the leaf?

THE LADY'S LAMENT.

NEVER happy any more!
Aye, turn the saying o'er and o'er,
It says but what it said before,
And heart and life are just as sore.
The wet leaves blow aslant the floor
In the rain through the open door.
No, no more.

Never happy any more!
The eyes are weary and give o'er,
But still the soul weeps as before.
And always must each one deplore
Each once, nor bear what others bore?
This is now as it was of yore.
No, no more.

Never happy any more!
Is it not but a sorry lore
That says, "Take strength, the worst is o'er"?
Shall the stars seem as heretofore?
The day wears on more and more—
While I was weeping the day wore.
No, no more.

Never happy any more !
In the cold behind the door
That was the dial striking four :
One for joy the past hours bore,
Two for hope and will cast o'er,
One for the naked dark before.
No, no more.

Never happy any more !
Put the light out, shut the door,
Sweep the wet leaves from the floor.
Even thus Fate's hand has swept her floor,
Even thus Love's hand has shut the door
Through which his warm feet passed of yore.
Shall it be opened any more ?
No, no, no more.

THE PORTRAIT.*

This is her picture as she was :
It seems a thing to wonder on,
As though mine image in the glass
Should tarry when myself am gone.
I gaze until she seems to stir,—
Until mine eyes almost aver
That now, even now, the sweet lips part
To breathe the words of the sweet heart :—
And yet the earth is over her.

* In printed notices of my brother's poems I have often seen the supposition advanced that this poem was written after the death of his wife, in relation to some portrait he had painted of her during her lifetime. The supposition is very natural—yet not correct. The poem was in fact an extremely early one, and purely imaginary,—perhaps, in the first draft of it, as early as 1847 ; it was afterwards considerably revised.

Alas! even such the thin-drawn ray—
  That makes the prison-depths more rude,—
The drip of water night and day
  Giving a tongue to solitude.
Yet only this, of love's whole prize,
Remains; save what in mournful guise
  Takes counsel with my soul alone,—
  Save what is secret and unknown,
Below the earth, above the skies.

In painting her I shrined her face
  'Mid mystic trees, where light falls in
Hardly at all; a overt place
  Where you might think to find a din
Of doubtful talk, and a live flame
Wandering, and many a shape whose name
  Not itself knoweth, and old dew,
  And your own footsteps meeting you,
And all things going as they came.

A deep dim wood; and there she stands
  As in that wood that day: for so
Was the still movement of her hands
  And such the pure line's gracious flow.
And passing fair the type must seem,
Unknown the presence and the dream.
  'Tis she: though of herself, alas!
  Less than her shadow on the grass
Or than her image in the stream.

That day we met there, I and she
  One with the other all alone;
And we were blithe; yet memory
  Saddens those hours, as when the moon
Looks upon daylight. And with her

I stooped to drink the spring-water,
  Athirst where other waters sprang :
  And where the echo is, she sang,—
My soul another echo there.

But when that hour my soul won strength
  For words whose silence wastes and kills,
Dull raindrops smote us, and at length
  Thundered the heat within the hills.
That eve I spoke those words again
Beside the pelted window-pane ;
  And there she hearkened what I said,
  With under-glances that surveyed
The empty pastures blind with rain.

Next day the memories of these things,
  Like leaves through which a bird has flown,
Still vibrated with Love's warm wings ;
  Till I must make them all my own
And paint this picture. So, 'twixt ease
Of talk and sweet long silences,
  She stood among the plants in bloom
  At windows of a summer room,
To feign the shadow of the trees.

And as I wrought, while all above
  And all around was fragrant air,
In the sick burthen of my love
  It seemed each sun-thrilled blossom there
Beat like a heart among the leaves.
O heart that never beats nor heaves,
  In that one darkness lying still,
  What now to thee my love's great will
Or the fine web the sunshine weaves ?

For now doth daylight disavow
Those days—nought left to see or hear.
Only in solemn whispers now
At night-time these things reach mine ear;
When the leaf-shadows at a breath
Shrink in the road, and all the heath,
Forest and water, far and wide,
In limpid starlight glorified,
Lie like the mystery of death.

Last night at last I could have slept,
And yet delayed my sleep till dawn,
Still wandering. Then it was I wept:
For unawares I came upon
Those glades where once she walked with me:
And as I stood there suddenly,
All wan with traversing the night,
Upon the desolate verge of light
Yearned loud the iron-bosomed sea.

Even so, where Heaven holds breath and hears
The beating heart of Love's own breast,—
Where round the secret of all spheres
All angels lay their wings to rest,—
How shall my soul stand rapt and awed,
When, by the new birth borne abroad
Throughout the music of the suns,
It enters in her soul at once
And knows the silence there for God!

Here with her face doth memory sit
Meanwhile, and wait the day's decline,
Till other eyes shall look from it,
Eyes of the spirit's Palestine,
Even than the old gaze tenderer:

While hopes and aims long lost with her
Stand round her image side by side,
Like tombs of pilgrims that have died
About the Holy Sepulchre.

AVE.

Mother of the Fair Delight,
Thou handmaid perfect in God's sight,
Now sitting fourth beside the Three,
Thyself a woman-Trinity,—
Being a daughter born to God,
Mother of Christ from stall to rood,
And wife unto the Holy Ghost:—
Oh when our need is uttermost,
Think that to such as death may strike
Thou once wert sister sisterlike!
Thou headstone of humanity,
Groundstone of the great Mystery,
Fashioned like us, yet more than we!

Mind'st thou not (when June's heavy breath
Warmed the long days in Nazareth,)
That eve thou didst go forth to give
Thy flowers some drink that they might live
One faint night more amid the sands?
Far off the trees were as pale wands
Against the fervid sky: the sea
Sighed further off eternally
As human sorrow sighs in sleep.
Then suddenly the awe grew deep,
As of a day to which all days
Were footsteps in God's secret ways:

Until a folding sense, like prayer,
Which is, as God is, everywhere,
Gathered about thee; and a voice
Spake to thee without any noise,
Being of the silence:—"Hail," it said,
"Thou that art highly favorèd;
The Lord is with thee here and now;
Blessed among all women thou."

Ah! knew'st thou of the end, when first
That Babe was on thy bosom nurs'd?—
Or when He tottered round thy knee
Did thy great sorrow dawn on thee?—
And through His boyhood, year by year
Eating with Him the Passover,
Didst thou discern confusedly
That holier sacrament, when He,
The bitter cup about to quaff,
Should break the bread and eat thereof?—
Or came not yet the knowledge, even
Till on some day forecast in Heaven
His feet passed through thy door to press
Upon His Father's business?—
Or still was God's high secret kept?

Nay, but I think the whisper crept
Like growth through childhood. Work and play,
Things common to the course of day,
Awed thee with meanings unfulfill'd;
And all through girlhood, something still'd
Thy senses like the birth of light,
When thou hast trimmed thy lamp at night
Or washed thy garments in the stream;
To whose white bed had come the dream

That He was thine and thou wast His
Who feeds among the field-lilies.
O solemn shadow of the end
In that wise spirit long contain'd!
O awful end! and those unsaid
Long years when It was Finishèd!

Mind'st thou not (when the twilight gone
Left darkness in the house of John,)
Between the naked window-bars
That spacious vigil of the stars?—
For thou, a watcher even as they,
Wouldst rise from where throughout the day
Thou wroughtest raiment for His poor;
And, finding the fixed terms endure
Of day and night which never brought
Sounds of His coming chariot,
Wouldst lift through cloud-waste unexplor'd
Those eyes which said, "How long, O Lord?"
Then that disciple whom He loved,
Well heeding, haply would be moved
To ask thy blessing in His name;
And that one thought in both, the same
Though silent, then would clasp ye round
To weep together,—tears long bound,
Sick tears of patience, dumb and slow.
Yet, "Surely I come quickly,"—so
He said, from life and death gone home.
Amen: even so, Lord Jesus, come!

But oh! what human tongue can speak
That day when Michael came * to break
From the tir'd spirit, like a veil,
Its covenant with Gabriel

* A Church legend of the Blessed Virgin's death.

Endured at length unto the end ?
What human thought can apprehend
That mystery of motherhood
When thy Beloved at length renew'd
The sweet communion severèd,—
His left hand underneath thine head
And His right hand embracing thee ?—
Lo ! He was thine, and this is He !

Soul, is it Faith, or Love, or Hope,
That lets me see her standing up
Where the light of the Throne is bright ?
Unto the left, unto the right,
The cherubim, succinct, conjoint,
Float inward to a golden point,
And from between the seraphim
The glory issues for a hymn.
O Mary Mother, be not loth
To listen,—thou whom the stars clothe,
Who seëst and mayst not be seen !
Hear us at last, O Mary Queen !
Into our shadow bend thy face,
Bowing thee from the secret place,
O Mary Virgin, full of grace !

THE CARD-DEALER.

Could you not drink her gaze like wine ?
Yet though its splendor swoon
Into the silence languidly
As a tune into a tune,
Those eyes unravel the coiled night
And know the stars at noon.

The gold that's heaped beside her hand,
In truth rich prize it were;
And rich the dreams that wreathe her brows
With magic stillness there;
And he were rich who should unwind
That woven golden hair.

Around her, where she sits, the dance
Now breathes its eager heat;
And not more lightly or more true
Fall there the dancers' feet
Than fall her cards on the bright board
As 'twere a heart that beat.

Her fingers let them softly through,
Smooth polished silent things;
And each one as it falls reflects
In swift light-shadowings,
Blood-red and purple, green and blue,
The great eyes of her rings.

Whom plays she with? With thee, who lov'st
Those gems upon her hand;
With me, who search her secret brows;
With all men, bless'd or bann'd.
We play together, she and we,
Within a vain strange land:

A land without any order,—
Day even as night, (one saith,)—
Where who lieth down ariseth not
Nor the sleeper awakeneth;
A land of darkness as darkness itself
And of the shadow of death.

What be her cards, you ask ? Even these :—
  The heart, that doth but crave
More, having fed ; the diamond,
  Skilled to make base seem brave ;
The club, for smiting in the dark ;
  The spade, to dig a grave.

And do you ask what game she plays ?
  With me 'tis lost or won ;
With thee it is playing still ; with him
  It is not well begun ;
But 'tis a game she plays with all
  Beneath the sway o' the sun.

Thou seest the card that falls,—she knows
  The card that followeth :
Her game in thy tongue is called Life,
  As ebbs thy daily breath :
When she shall speak, thou'lt learn her tongue
  And know she calls it Death.

WORLD'S WORTH.

'Tis of the Father Hilary.
  He strove, but could not pray ; so took
  The steep-coiled stair, where his feet shook
A sad blind echo. Ever up
  He toiled. 'Twas a sick sway of air
    That autumn noon within the stair,
As dizzy as a turning cup.
  His brain benumbed him, void and thin ;
  He shut his eyes and felt it spin ;
  The obscure deafness hemmed him in.
He said : "O world, what world for me ?"

He leaned unto the balcony
  Where the chime keeps the night and day ;
  It hurt his brain, he could not pray.
He had his face upon the stone :
  Deep 'twixt the narrow shafts, his eye
  Passed all the roofs to the stark sky,
Swept with no wing, with wind alone.
  Close to his feet the sky did shake
  With wind in pools that the rains make :
  The ripple set his eyes to ache.
He said : " O world, what world for me ?"

He stood within the mystery
  Girding God's blessed Eucharist :
  The organ and the chaunt had ceas'd.
The last words paused against his ear
  Said from the altar : drawn round him
  The gathering rest was dumb and dim.
And now the sacring-bell rang clear
  And ceased ; and all was awe,—the breath
  Of God in man that warranteth
The inmost utmost things of faith.
He said : " O God, my world in Thee !"

ON THE REFUSAL OF AID BETWEEN NATIONS.*

Not that the earth is changing, O my God !
  Nor that the seasons totter in their walk,—
  Not that the virulent ill of act and talk
Seethes ever as a winepress ever trod,—

* This sonnet was written in 1849, or perhaps 1848. It refers to the apathy with which other countries witnessed the national struggles of Italy and Hungary against Austria.

Not therefore are we certain that the rod
Weighs in thine hand to smite thy world ; though now
Beneath thine hand so many nations bow,
So many kings :—not therefore, O my God !—

But because Man is parcelled out in men
To-day ; because, for any wrongful blow
No man not stricken asks, " I would be told
Why thou dost thus ;" but his heart whispers then,
" He is he, I am I." By this we know
That our earth falls asunder, being old.

ON THE VITA NUOVA OF DANTE.

As he that loves oft looks on the dear form
And guesses how it grew to womanhood,
And gladly would have watched the beauties bud
And the mild fire of precious life wax warm :
So I, long bound within the threefold charm
Of Dante's love sublimed to heavenly mood,
Had marvelled, touching his Beatitude,
How grew such presence from man's shameful swarm.

At length within this book I found portrayed
Newborn that Paradisal Love of his,
And simple like a child ; with whose clear aid
I understood. To such a child as this,
Christ, charging well His chosen ones, forbade
Offence : " for, lo ! of such my kingdom is."

SONG AND MUSIC.

O LEAVE your hand where it lies cool
Upon the eyes whose lids are hot :
Its rosy shade is bountiful
Of silence, and assuages thought.

O lay your lips against your hand
And let me feel your breath through it,
While through the sense your song shall fit
The soul to understand.

The music lives upon my brain
Between your hands within mine eyes;
It stirs your lifted throat like pain,
An aching pulse of melodies.
Lean nearer, let the music pause:
The soul may better understand
Your music, shadowed in your hand
Now while the song withdraws.

THE SEA LIMITS.

Consider the sea's listless chime:
Time's self it is, made audible,—
The murmur of the earth's own shell.
Secret continuance sublime
Is the sea's end: our sight may pass
No furlong further. Since time was,
This sound hath told the lapse of time.

No quiet, which is death's,—it hath
The mournfulness of ancient life,
Enduring always at dull strife.
As the world's heart of rest and wrath,
Its painful pulse is in the sands.
Last utterly, the whole sky stands,
Gray and not known, along its path.

Listen alone beside the sea,
Listen alone among the woods;
Those voices of twin solitudes

Shall have one sound alike to thee :
  Hark where the murmurs of thronged men
  Surge and sink back and surge again,—
Still the one voice of wave and tree.

Gather a shell from the strown beach
  And listen at its lips : they sigh
  The same desire and mystery,
The echo of the whole sea's speech.
  And all mankind is thus at heart
  Not anything but what thou art :
And Earth, Sea, Man, are all in each.

A TRIP TO PARIS AND BELGIUM.*

I.

LONDON TO FOLKESTONE.

A CONSTANT keeping-past of shaken trees,
And a bewildered glitter of loose road ;
Banks of bright growth, with single blades atop

* In the autumn of 1849 my brother undertook this trip along with Mr. Holman Hunt. He wrote the verses mostly while actually travelling by rail, etc., and sent them in his letters to me. Under the above heading I have pieced together such portions of his verse-missives as appear to me worthy of preservation in the present form. Much the same observation applies to the two ensuing sonnets, THE STAIRCASE OF NOTRE DAME, PARIS, and ON LEAVING BRUGES; and to the lyric, NEAR BRUSSELS, A HALFWAY PAUSE. The sonnet, *Place de la Bastille, Paris*, belongs to the same series; it is the only one of the set which my brother published in one of his volumes (*Ballads and Sonnets*). The lyric *Antwerp and Bruges* is an altered version (as I find it in his own MS.) of *The Carillon*, which was printed in *The Germ*.

Against white sky : and wires—a constant chain—
That seem to draw the clouds along with them
(Things which one stoops against the light to see
Through the low window ; shaking by at rest,
Or fierce like water as the swiftness grows) ;
And, seen through fences or a bridge far off,
Trees that in moving keep their intervals
Still one 'twixt bar and bar ; and then at times
Long reaches of green level, where one cow,
Feeding among her fellows that feed on,
Lifts her slow neck, and gazes for the sound.

Fields mown in ridges ; and close garden-crops
Of the earth's increase ; and a constant sky
Still with clear trees that let you see the wind ;
And snatches of the engine-smoke, by fits
Tossed to the wind against the landscape, where
Rooks stooping heave their wings upon the day.

Brick walls we pass between, passed so at once
That for the suddenness I cannot know
Or what, or where begun, or where at end.
Sometimes a station in gray quiet ; whence,
With a short gathered champing of pent sound,
We are let out upon the air again.
Pauses of water soon, at intervals,
That has the sky in it ;—the reflexes
O' the trees move towards the bank as we go by,
Leaving the water's surface plain. I now
Lie back and close my eyes a space ; for they
Smart from the open forwardness of thought
Fronting the wind.

* * * * *

I did not scribble more,
Be certain, after this ; but yawned, and read,

And nearly dozed a little, I believe;
Till, stretching up against the carriage-back,
I was roused altogether, and looked out
To where the pale sea brooded murmuring.

II.

OULOGNE TO AMIENS AND PARIS.

Strong extreme speed, that the brain hurries with,
Further than trees, and hedges, and green grass
Whitened by distance,—further than small pools
Held among fields and gardens, further than
Haystacks, and wind-mill-sails, and roofs and herds,—
The sea's last margin ceases at the sun.

The sea has left us, but the sun remains.
Sometimes the country spreads aloof in tracts
Smooth from the harvest; sometimes sky and land
Are shut from the square space the window leaves
By a dense crowd of trees, stem behind stem
Passing across each other as we pass:
Sometimes tall poplar-wands stand white, their heads
Outmeasuring the distant hills. Sometimes
The ground has a deep greenness; sometimes brown
In stubble; and sometimes no ground at all,
For the close strength of crops that stand unreaped.
The water-plots are sometimes all the sun's,—
Sometimes quite green through shadows filling them,
Or islanded with growths of reeds,—or else
Masked in gray dust like the wide face o' the fields.
And still the swiftness lasts; that to our speed
The trees seem shaken like a press of spears.

There is some count of us :—folks travelling capped,
Priesthood, and lank hard-featured soldiery,
Females (no women), blouses, Hunt, and I.

We are relayed at Amiens. The steam
Snorts, chafes, and bridles, like three hundred horse,
And flings its dusky mane upon the air.
Our company is thinned, and lamps alight.
But still there are the folks in travelling-caps,
No priesthood now, but always soldiery,
And babies to make up for show in noise ;
Females (no women), blouses, Hunt, and I.

Our windows at one side are shut for warmth ;
Upon the other side, a leaden sky,
Hung in blank glare, makes all the country dim,
Which too seems bald and meagre,—be it truth,
Or of the waxing darkness. Here and there
The shade takes light, where in thin patches stand
The stirred undregs of water.

III.

THE PARIS RAILWAY-STATION.

In France, (to baffle thieves and murderers)
A journey takes two days of passport work
At least. The plan's sometimes a tedious one,
But bears its fruit. Because, the other day,
In passing by the Morgue, we saw a man
(The thing is common, and we never should
Have known of it, only we passed that way)
Who had been stabbed and tumbled in the Seine,
Where he had stayed some days. The face was black,
And, like a negro's, swollen ; all the flesh
Had furred, and broken into a green mould.

Now, very likely, he who did the job
Was standing among those who stood with us,
To look upon the corpse. You fancy him—
Smoking an early pipe, and watching, as
An artist, the effect of his last work.
This always if it had not struck him that
'Twere best to leave while yet the body took
Its crust of rot beneath the Seine. It may:
But, if it did not, he can now remain
Without much fear. *Only*, if he should want
To travel, and have not his passport yet,
(Deep dogs these French police!) he may be caught.

Therefore you see (lest, being murderers,
We should not have the sense to go before
The thing were known, or to stay afterwards)
There is good reason why—having resolved
To start for Belgium—we were kept three days
To learn about the passports first, then do
As we had learned. This notwithstanding, in
The fulness of the time 'tis come to pass.

IV.

REACHING BRUSSELS.

There is small change of country; but the sun
Is out, and it seems shame this were not said.
For upon all the grass the warmth has caught;
And betwixt distant whitened poplar-stems
Makes greener darkness; and in dells of trees
Shows spaces of a verdure that was hid;
And the sky has its blue floated with white,
And crossed with falls of the sun's glory aslant
To lay upon the waters of the world;

And from the road men stand with shaded eyes
To look ; and flowers in gardens have grown strong ;
And our own shadows here within the coach
Are brighter ; and all color has more bloom.

So, after the sore torments of the route ;—
Toothache, and headache, and the ache of wind,
And huddled sleep, and smarting wakefulness,
And night, and day, and hunger sick at food,
And twenty-fold relays, and packages
To be unlocked, and passports to be found,
And heavy well-kept landscape ;—we were glad
Because we entered Brussels in the sun.

V.

ANTWERP TO GHENT.

We are upon the Scheldt. We know we move
Because there is a floating at our eyes
Whatso they seek ; and because all the things
Which on our outset were distinct and large
Are smaller and much weaker and quite gray,
And at last gone from us. No motion else.

We are upon the road. The thin swift moon
Runs with the running clouds that are the sky,
And with the running water runs—at whiles
Weak 'neath the film and heavy growth of reeds.
The country swims with motion. Time itself
Is consciously beside us, and perceived.
Our speed is such the sparks our engine leaves
Are burning after the whole train has passed.

The darkness is a tumult. We tear on,
The roll behind us and the cry before,
Constantly, in a lull of intense speed
And thunder. Any other sound is known
Merely by sight. The shrubs, the trees your eye
Scans for their growth, are far along in haze.
The sky has lost its clouds, and lies away
Oppressively at calm : the moon has failed :
Our speed has set the wind against us. Now
Our engine's heat is fiercer, and flings up
Great glares alongside. Wind and steam and speed
And clamor and the night. We are in Ghent.

THE STAIRCASE OF NOTRE DAME, PARIS.

As one who, groping in a narrow stair,
  Hath a strong sound of bells upon his ears,
  Which, being at a distance off, appears
Quite close to him because of the pent air :
So with this France. She stumbles file and square
  Darkling and without space for breath : each one
  Who hears the thunder says : "It shall anon
Be in among her ranks to scatter her."

This may be ; and it may be that the storm
  Is spent in rain upon the unscathed seas,
    Or wasteth other countries ere it die :
Till she,—having climbed always through the swarm
  Of darkness and of hurtling sound,—from these
    Shall step forth on the light in a still sky.

PLACE DE LA BASTILLE, PARIS.

How dear the sky has been above this place!
Small treasures of this sky that we see here
Seem weak through prison-bars from year to year;
Eyed with a painful prayer upon God's grace
To save, and tears that stayed along the face
Lifted at sunset. Yea, how passing dear,
Those nights when through the bars a wind left clear
The heaven, and moonlight soothed the limpid space!

So was it, till one night the secret kept
Safe in low vault and stealthy corridor
Was blown abroad on gospel-tongues of flame.
O ways of God, mysterious evermore!
How many on this spot have cursed and wept
That all might stand here now and own Thy Name.

NEAR BRUSSELS—A HALF-WAY PAUSE.

The turn of noontide has begun,
In the weak breeze the sunshine yields.
There is a bell upon the fields.
On the long hedgerow's tangled run
A low white cottage intervenes:
Against the wall a blind man leans,
And sways his face to have the sun.

Our horses' hoofs stir in the road,
Quiet and sharp. Light hath a song
Whose silence, being heard, seems long.

The point of noon maketh abode,
And will not be at once gone through.
The sky's deep color saddens you,
And the heat weighs a dreamy load.

ANTWERP AND BRUGES.

I CLIMBED the stair in Antwerp church,
What time the circling thews of sound
At sunset seem to heave it round.
Far up, the carillon did search
The wind, and the birds came to perch
Far under, where the gables wound.

In Antwerp harbor on the Scheldt
I stood along, a certain space
Of night. The mist was near my face;
Deep on, the flow was heard and felt.
The carillon kept pause, and dwelt
In music through the silent place.

John Memmeling and John van Eyck
Hold state at Bruges. In sore shame
I scanned the works that keep their name.
The carillon, which then did strike
Mine ears, was heard of theirs alike:
It set me closer unto them.

I climbed at Bruges all the flight
The belfry has of ancient stone.
For leagues I saw the east wind blown;
The earth was gray, the sky was white.
I stood so near upon the height
That my flesh felt the carillon.

ON LEAVING BRUGES.

The city's steeple-towers remove away,
Each singly ; as each vain infatuate Faith
Leaves God in heaven, and passes. A mere breath
Each soon appears, so far. Yet that which lay
The first is now scarce further or more gray
Than the last is. Now all are wholly gone.
The sunless sky has not once had the sun
Since the first weak beginning of the day.

The air falls back as the wind finishes,
And the clouds stagnate. On the water's face
The current breathes along, but is not stirred.
There is no branch that thrills with any bird.
Winter is to possess the earth a space,
And have its will upon the extreme seas.

VOX ECCLESIÆ, VOX CHRISTI.*

I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held ; and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth ?—Rev. vi. 9, 10.

Not 'neath the altar only,—yet, in sooth,
There more than elsewhere,—is the cry, "How long ?"
The right sown there hath still borne fruit in wrong—
The wrong waxed fourfold. Thence, (in hate of truth)

* This sonnet, hitherto unpublished, was written in 1849. My brother wrote it to serve as a pendent to a sonnet of my own composition which was published in *The Germ*, 1850,

O'er weapons blessed for carnage, to fierce youth
From evil age, the word hath hissed along :—
"Ye are the Lord's : go forth, destroy, be strong :
Christ's Church absolves ye from Christ's law of ruth."

Therefore the wine-cup at the altar is
As Christ's own blood indeed, and as the blood
Of Christ's elect, at divers seasons spilt
On the altar-stone, that to man's church, for this,
Shall prove a stone of stumbling,—whence it stood
To be rent up ere the true Church be built.

THE BURDEN OF NINEVEH.

In our Museum galleries
To-day I lingered o'er the prize
Dead Greece vouchsafes to living eyes,—
Her Art forever in fresh wise
From hour to hour rejoicing me.
Sighing I turned at last to win
Once more the London dirt and din ;

under the vague title *The Evil under the Sun* ("How long, O Lord," etc.). That title was vamped up to appease the publisher's nervousness ; the sonnet being in fact written by me as a sorrowful commemoration of the collapse—the temporary collapse, as we now know it to have been—of various revolutionary movements in Europe, especially that of Hungary. My own title for the sonnet was *On the General Oppression of the Better by the Worse Cause, October* 1849. The sonnet has of late years been more than once republished under a more generalized title, *Democracy Downtrodden*. I mention these facts, not to thrust my own performance into notice, but to bring out the more clearly the precise point of view which marks my brother's sonnet.

And as I made the swing-door spin
And issued, they were hoisting in
A wingèd beast from Nineveh.

A human face the creature wore,
And hoofs behind and hoofs before,
And flanks with dark runes fretted o'er.
'Twas bull, 'twas mitred Minotaur,
A dead disbowelled mystery :
The mummy of a buried faith
Stark from the charnel without scathe,
Its wings stood for the light to bathe,—
Such fossil cerements as might swathe
The very corpse of Nineveh.

The print of its first rush-wrapping,
Wound ere it dried, still ribbed the thing.
What song did the brown maidens sing,
From purple mouths alternating,
When that was woven languidly ?
What vows, what rites, what prayers preferr'd,
What songs has the strange image heard ?
In what blind vigil stood interr'd
For ages, till an English word
Broke silence first at Nineveh ?

Oh when upon each sculptured court,
Where even the wind might not resort,—
O'er which Time passed, of like import
With the wild Arab boys at sport,—
A living face looked in to see :—
Oh seemed it not—the spell once broke—
As though the carven warriors woke,
As though the shaft the string forsook,
The cymbals clashed, the chariots shook,
And there was life in Nineveh ?

On London stones our sun anew
The beast's recovered shadow threw.
(No shade that plague of darkness knew,
No light, no shade, while older grew
By ages the old earth and sea.)
Lo thou! could all thy priests have shown
Such proof to make thy godhead known?
From their dead Past thou liv'st alone;
And still thy shadow is thine own,
Even as of yore in Nineveh.

That day whereof we keep record,
When near thy city-gates the Lord
Sheltered His Jonah with a gourd,
This sun, (I said) here present, pour'd
Even thus this shadow that I see.
This shadow has been shed the same
From sun and moon,—from lamps which came
For prayer,—from fifteen days of flame,
The last, while smouldered to a name
Sardanapalus' Nineveh.

Within thy shadow, haply, once
Sennacherib has knelt, whose sons
Smote him between the altar-stones:
Or pale Semiramis her zones
Of gold, her incense brought to thee,
In love for grace, in war for aid: . . . .
Ay, and who else? . . . . till 'neath thy shade
Within his trenches newly made
Last year the Christian knelt and pray'd—
Not to thy strength—in Nineveh.*

* During the excavations, the Tiyari workmen held their services in the shadow of the great bulls.—(*Layard's "Nineveh,"* ch. ix.)

Now, thou poor god, within this hall
Where the blank windows blind the wall
From pedestal to pedestal,
The kind of light shall on thee fall
Which London take the day to be:
  While school-foundations in the act
Of holiday, three files compact,
Shall learn to view thee as a fact
Connected with that zealous tract:
  "Rome,—Babylon and Nineveh."

Deemed they of this, those worshippers,
When, in some mythic chain of verse
Which man shall not again rehearse,
The faces of thy ministers
  Yearned pale with bitter ecstasy?
Greece, Egypt, Rome,—did any god
Before whose feet men knelt unshod
Deem that in this unblest abode
Another scarce more unknown god
  Should house with him, from Nineveh?

Ah! in what quarries lay the stone
From which this pillared pile has grown,
Unto man's need how long unknown,
Since those thy temples, court and cone,
  Rose far in desert history?
Ah! what is here that does not lie
All strange to thine awakened eye?
Ah! what is here can testify
(Save that dumb presence of the sky)
  Unto thy day and Nineveh?

Why, of those mummies in the room
Above, there might indeed have come

One out of Egypt to thy home,
An alien. Nay, but were not some
Of these thine own "antiquity"?
And now,—they and their gods and thou
All relics here together,—now
Whose profit? whether bull or cow,
Isis or Ibis, who or how,
Whether of Thebes or Nineveh?

The consecrated metals found,
And ivory tablets, underground,
Winged teraphim and creatures crown'd,
When air and daylight filled the mound,
Fell into dust immediately.
And even as these, the images
Of awe and worship,—even as these,—
So, smitten with the sun's increase,
Her glory mouldered and did cease
From immemorial Nineveh.

The day her builders made their halt,
Those cities of the lake of salt
Stood firmly 'stablished without fault,
Made proud with pillars of basalt,
With sardonyx and prophyry.
The day that Jonah bore abroad
To Nineveh the voice of God.
A brackish lake lay in his road,
Where erst Pride fixed her sure abode,
As then in royal Nineveh.

The day when he, Pride's lord and Man's,
Showed all the kingdoms at a glance

To Him before whose countenance
The years recede, the years advance,
  And said, Fall down and worship me :—
'Mid all the pomp beneath that look,
Then stirred there, haply, some rebuke,
Where to the wind the Salt Pools shook,
And in those tracts, of life forsook,
  That knew thee not, O Nineveh !

Delicate harlot ! On thy throne
Thou with a world beneath thee prone
In state for ages sat'st alone ;
And needs were years and lustres flown
  Ere strength of man could vanquish thee :
Whom even thy victor foes must bring,
Still royal, among maids that sing
As with doves' voices, taboring
Upon their breasts, unto the King,—
  A kingly conquest, Nineveh !

. . . Here woke my thought. The wind's slow sway
Had waxed ; and like the human play
Of scorn that smiling spreads away,
The sunshine shivered off the day :
  The callous wind, it seemed to me,
Swept up the shadow from the ground :
And pale as whom the Fates astound,
The god forlorn stood winged and crown'd :
Within I knew the cry lay bound
  Of the dumb soul of Nineveh.

And as I turned, my sense half shut
Still saw the crowds of kerb and rut
Go past as marshalled to the strut
Of ranks in gypsum quaintly cut.
  It seemed in one same pageantry

They followed forms which had been erst ;
To pass, till on my sight should burst
That future of the best or worst
When some may question which was first,
Of London or of Nineveh.

For as that Bull-god once did stand
And watched the burial-clouds of sand,
Till these at last without a hand
Rose o'er his eyes, another land,
And blinded him with destiny :—
So may he stand again ; till now,
In ships of unknown sail and prow,
Some tribe of the Australian plough
Bear him afar,—a relic now
Of London, not of Nineveh !

Or it may chance indeed that when
Man's age is hoary among men,—
His centuries threescore and ten,—
His furthest childhood shall seem then
More clear than later times may be :
Who, finding in this desert place
This form, shall hold us for some race
That walked not in Christ's lowly ways,
But bowed its pride and vowed its praise
Unto the God of Nineveh.

The smile rose first,—anon drew nigh
The thought : . . Those heavy wings spread high,
So sure of flight, which do not fly ;
That set gaze never on the sky ;
Those scriptured flanks it cannot see ;

Its crown, a brow-contracting load;
Its planted feet which trust the sod: . . .
(So grew the image as I trod:)
O Nineveh, was this thy God,—
Thine also, mighty Nineveh?

THE CHURCH-PORCH.*

SISTER, first shake we off the dust we have
Upon our feet, lest it defile the stones
Inscriptured, covering their sacred bones
Who lie i' the aisles which keep the names they gave,
Their trust abiding round them in the grave;
Whom painters paint for visible orisons,
And to whom sculptors pray in stone and bronze;
Their voices echo still like a spent wave.

Without here, the church-bells are but a tune,
And on the carven church-door this hot noon
Lays all its heavy sunshine here without:
But having entered in, we shall find there
Silence, and sudden dimness, and deep prayer,
And faces of crowned angels all about.

* This sonnet was published by my brother in the volume *Ballads and Sonnets*. It was written as one of a brace of sonnets. He never published the second; but this is to be found in an article, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, by Mr. Gosse, printed in *The Century Magazine* in 1882. I am rather reluctant to miss out that second sonnet; but, as my brother saw fit to leave it unused when he gave publicity to the first, I have decided to conform.

THE MIRROR.*

SHE knew it not :—most perfect pain
To learn : this too she knew not. Strife
For me, calm hers, as from the first.
'Twas but another bubble burst
Upon the curdling draught of life,—
My silent patience mine again.

As who, of forms that crowd unknown
Within a distant mirror's shade,
Deems such an one himself, and makes
Some sign ; but when the image shakes
No whit, he finds his thought betray'd,
And must seek elsewhere for his own.

A YOUNG FIR-WOOD.†

THESE little firs to-day are things
To clasp into a giant's cap,
Or fans to suit his lady's lap.
From many winters many springs
Shall cherish them in strength and sap
Till they be marked upon the map,
A wood for the wind's wanderings.

* Written in 1850. My brother never published this snatch of verse, but he had a certain liking for it, and I think it should now find a niche among his works.

† A MS. of these verses is marked by my brother, "Between Ightham and Sevenoaks, November 1850."

All seed is in the sower's hands :
  And what at first was trained to spread
  Its shelter for some single head,—
Yea, even such fellowship of wands,—
  May hide the sunset, and the shade
  Of its great multitude be laid
Upon the earth and elder sands.

DURING MUSIC.*

O cool unto the sense of pain
  That last night's sleep could not destroy ;
  O warm unto the sense of joy,
That dreams its life within the brain.

What though I lean o'er thee to scan
  The written music cramped and stiff ;—
  'Tis dark to me, as hieroglyph
On those weird bulks Egyptian.

But as from those, dumb now and strange,
  A glory wanders on the earth,
  Even so thy tones can call a birth
From these, to shake my soul with change.

O swift, as in melodious haste
  Float o'er the keys thy fingers small ;
  O soft, as is the rise and fall
Which stirs that shade within thy breast.

* Written in 1851. Hitherto unpublished.

STRATTON WATER.

"O HAVE you seen the Stratton flood
That's great with rain to-day?
It runs beneath your wall, Lord Sands,
Full of the new-mown hay.

"I led your hounds to Hutton bank
To bathe at early morn:
They got their bath by Borrowbrake
Above the standing corn."

Out from the castle-stair Lord Sands
Looked up the Western lea;
The rook was grieving on her nest,
The flood was round her tree.

Over the castle-wall Lord Sands
Looked down the eastern hill:
The stakes swam free among the boats,
The flood was rising still.

"What's yonder far below that lies
So white against the slope?"
"O it's a sail o' your bonny barks
The waters have washed up."

"But I have never a sail so white,
And the water's not yet there."
"O it's the swans o' your bonny lake
The rising flood doth scare."

"The swans they would not hold so still,
So high they would not win."
"O it's Joyce my wife has spread her smock
And fears to fetch it in."

"Nay, knave, it's neither sail nor swans,
Nor aught that you can say;
For though your wife might leave her smock,
Herself she'd bring away."

Lord Sands has passed the turret-stair,
The court, and yard, and all;
The kine were in the byre that day,
The nags were in the stall.

Lord Sands has won the weltering slope
Whereon the white shape lay:
The clouds were still above the hill,
And the shape was still as they.

Oh pleasant is the gaze of life
And sad is death's blind head;
But awful are the living eyes
In the face of one thought dead!

"In God's name, Janet, is it me
Thy ghost has come to seek?"
"Nay, wait another hour, Lord Sands,—
Be sure my ghost shall speak."

A moment stood he as a stone,
Then grovelled to his knee.
"O Janet, O my love, my love,
Rise up and come with me!"
"O once before you bade me come,
And it's here you have brought me!

"O many's the sweet word, Lord Sands,
You've spoken oft to me;
But all that I have from you to-day
Is the rain on my body.

"And many's the good gift, Lord Sands,
You've promised oft to me;
But the gift of yours I keep to-day
Is the babe in my body.

"O it's not in any earthly bed
That first my babe I'll see;
For I have brought my body here
That the flood may cover me."

His face was close against her face,
His hands of hers were fain:
O her wet cheeks were hot with tears,
Her wet hands cold with rain.

"They told me you were dead, Janet,—
How could I guess the lie?"
"They told me you were false, Lord Sands,—
What could I do but die?"

"Now keep you well, my brother Giles,—
Through you I deemed her dead!
As wan as your towers seem to-day,
To-morrow they'll be red.

"Look down, look down, my false mother,
That bade me not to grieve:
You'll look up when our marriage fires
Are lit to-morrow eve:

"O more than one and more than two
The sorrow of this shall see:
But it's to-morrow, love, for them,—
To-day's for thee and me."

He's drawn her face between his hands
And her pale mouth to his :
No bird that was so still that day
Chirps sweeter than his kiss.

The flood was creeping round their feet.
"O Janet, come away !
The hall is warm for the marriage-rite,
The bed for the birthday."

"Nay, but I hear your mother cry,
'Go bring this bride to bed !
And would she christen her babe unborn,
So wet she comes to wed ?'

"I'll be your wife to cross your door
And meet your mother's e'e.
We plighted troth to wed i' the kirk,
And it's there you'll wed with me."

"He's ta'en her by the short girdle
And by the dripping sleeve :
"Go fetch Sir Jock my mother's priest,—
You'll ask of him no leave.

"O it's one half-hour to reach the kirk
And one for the marriage-rite ;
And kirk and castle and castle-lands
Shall be our babe's to-night."

"The flood's in the kirkyard, Lord Sands,
And around the belfry-stair."
"I bade you fetch the priest," he said,
"Myself shall bring him there.

"It's for the lilt of wedding bells
We'll have the hail to pour,
And for the clink of bridle-reins
The plashing of the oar."

Beneath them on the nether hill
A boat was floating wide:
Lord Sands swam out and caught the oars
And rowed to the hill-side.

He's wrapped her in a green mantle
And set her softly in;
Her hair was wet upon her face,
Her face was gray and thin;
And "Oh!" she said, "lie still, my babe,
It's out you must not win!"

But woe's my heart for Father John
As hard as he might pray,
There seemed no help but Noah's ark
Or Jonah's fish that day.

The first strokes that the oars struck
Were over the broad leas;
The next strokes that the oars struck
They pushed beneath the trees;

The last stroke that the oars struck,
The good boat's head was met,
And there the gate of the kirkyard
Stood like a ferry-gate.

He's set his hand upon the bar
And lightly leaped within:
He's lifted her to his left shoulder,
Her knees beside his chin.

The graves lay deep beneath the flood
  Under the rain alone ;
And when the foot-stone made him slip,
  He held by the head-stone.

The empty boat thrawed i' the wind,
  Against the postern tied.
"Hold still, you've brought my love with me,
You shall take back my bride."

But woe's my heart for Father John
  And the saints he clamored to !
There's never a saint but Christopher
  Might hale such buttocks through !

And "Oh !" she said, "on men's shoulders
  I well had thought to wend,
And well to travel with a priest,
  But not to have cared or ken'd.

"And oh !" she said, "it's well this way
  That I thought to have fared,—
Not to have lighted at the kirk
  But stopped in the kirkyard.

"For it's oh and oh I prayed to God,
  Whose rest I hoped to win,
That when to-night at your board-head
  You'd bid the feast begin,
This water past your window-sill
  Might bear my body in."

Now make the white bed warm and soft
  And greet the merry morn.
The night the mother should have died,
  The young son shall be born.

WELLINGTON'S FUNERAL.*

18*th November*, 1852.

"Victory!"
So once more the cry must be.
Duteous mourning we fulfil
In God's name; but by God's will,
Doubt not, the last word is still
"Victory!"

Funeral,
In the music round this pall
Solemn grief yields earth to earth;
But what tones of solemn mirth
In the pageant of new birth
Rise and fall?

For indeed,
If our eyes were openèd,
Who shall say what escort floats
Here, which breath nor gleam denotes,—
Fiery horses, chariots
Fire-footed?

Trumpeter,
Even thy call he may not hear;
Long-known voice forever past,
Till with one more trumpet-blast
God's assuring word at last
Reach his ear.

* In one of my brother's jotting-books I find the following entry: "When printing in 1870, I omitted the piece on Wellington's Funeral as referring to so recent a date; but year by year such themes become more dateless, and rank only with immortal things."

Multitude,
Hold your breath in reverent mood :
For while earth's whole kindred stand
Mute even thus on either hand,
This soul's labor shall be scann'd
And found good.

Cherubim,
Lift ye not even now your hymn ?
Lo ! once lent for human lack,
Michael's sword is rendered back.
Thrills not now the starry track,
Seraphim ?

Gabriel,
Since the gift of thine " All hail ! "
Out of Heaven no time hath brought
Gift with fuller blessing fraught
Than the peace which this man wrought
Passing well.

Be no word
Raised of bloodshed Christ abhorr'd.
Say : " 'Twas thus in His decrees
Who Himself, the Prince of Peace,
For His harvest's high increase
Sent a sword.

Veterans,
He by whom the neck of France
Then was given unto your heel,
Timely sought, may lend as well
To your sons his terrible
Countenance.

Waterloo!
As the last grave must renew,
Ere fresh death, the banshee-strain,—
So methinks upon thy plain
Falls some presage in the rain,
In the dew.

And O thou,
Watching with an exile's brow
Unappeased, o'er death's dumb flood:—
Lo! the saving strength of God
In some new heart's English blood
Slumbers now.

Emperor,
Is this all thy work was for?—
Thus to see thy self-sought aim,
Yea thy titles, yea thy name,
In another's shame, to shame
Bandied o'er?*

Wellington,
Thy great work is but begun.
With quick seed his end is rife
Whose long tale of conquering strife
Shows no triumph like his life
Lost and won.

PENUMBRA.

I DID not look upon her eyes,
(Though scarcely seen, with no surprise,
'Mid many eyes a single look,)
Because they should not gaze rebuke,
At night, from stars in sky and brook.

* Date of the *Coup d'Etat:* 2d December, 1851.

I did not take her by the hand,
(Though little was to understand
From touch of hand all friends might take,)
Because it should not prove a flake
Burnt in my palm to boil and ache.

I did not listen to her voice,
(Though none had noted, where at choice
All might rejoice in listening,)
Because no such a thing should cling
In the wood's moan at evening.

I did not cross her shadow once,
(Though from the hollow west the sun's
Last shadow runs along so far,)
Because in June it should not bar
My ways, at noon when fevers are.

They told me she was sad that day,
(Though wherefore tell what love's soothsay,
Sooner than they, did register ?)
And my heart leapt and wept to her,
And yet I did not speak nor stir.

So shall the tongues of the sea's foam
(Though many voices therewith come
From drowned hope's home to cry to me,)
Bewail one hour the more, when sea
And wind are one with memory.

ON THE SITE OF A MULBERRY-TREE;*

Planted by Wm. Shakspeare; felled by the Rev. F. Gastrell.

THIS tree, here fall'n, no common birth or death
Shared with its kind. The world's enfranchised son,
Who found the trees of Life and Knowledge one,
Here set it, frailer than his laurel-wreath.
Shall not the wretch whose hand it fell beneath
Rank also singly—the supreme unhung?
Lo! Sheppard, Turpin, pleading with black tongue
This viler thief's unsuffocated breath!

We'll search thy glossary, Shakspeare! whence almost,
And whence alone, some name shall be reveal'd
For this deaf drudge, to whom no length of ears
Sufficed to catch the music of the spheres;
Whose soul is carrion now,—too mean to yield
Some Starveling's ninth allotment of a ghost.

* My brother had this sonnet printed long ago, but never published it except in the *Academy* for February 15, 1871. In the last line he substituted (in MS.) the word "Starveling's" for "tailor's"; and I remember he once told me that his real reason for not publishing the sonnet in either of his volumes was to avoid hurting the feelings of some sensitive member or members of the tailoring craft who might dislike the line in its original wording. This point is referred to in a letter addressed by my brother to Mr. Hall Caine and published in that gentleman's *Recollections of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*.

ON CERTAIN ELIZABETHAN REVIVALS.*

O RUFF-EMBASTIONED vast Elizabeth,
Bush to these bushel-bellied casks of wine,
Home-growth, 'tis true, but rank as turpentine—
What would we with such skittle-plays at death!
Say, must we watch these brawlers' brandished lathe,
Or to their reeking wit our ears incline,
Because all Castaly flowed crystalline
In gentle Shakspeare's modulated breath?

What! must our drama with the rat-pit vie,
Nor the scene close while one is left to kill?
Shall this be poetry? And thou—thou man
Of blood, thou cannibalic Caliban,
What shall be said of thee? A poet?—Fie!
"An honorable murderer, if you will."

ENGLISH MAY.†

WOULD God your health were as this month of May
Should be, were this not England,—and your face
Abroad, to give the gracious sunshine grace
And laugh beneath the budding hawthorn-spray.

* This sonnet had hitherto appeared only in Mr. Caine's volume above-mentioned. My brother had offered it for the collection, *Sonnets of Three Centuries*, compiled by Mr. Caine; but it dropped out of that book, as being little in harmony with the other contributions therein by Rossetti. The sonnet was written many years prior to the date of either of Mr. Caine's volumes.

† This sonnet had not hitherto been published. I regard it as addressed to Miss Siddal, whom my brother married in 1860. Its date may probably have been 1854.

But here the hedgerows pine from green to gray
While yet May's lyre is tuning, and her song
Is weak in shade that should in sun be strong;
And your pulse springs not to so faint a lay.

If in my life be breath of Italy,
Would God that I might yield it all to you!
So, when such grafted warmth had burgeoned through
The languors of your Maytime's hawthorn-tree,
My spirit at rest should walk unseen and see
The garland of your beauty bloom anew.

BEAUTY AND THE BIRD.

She fluted with her mouth as when one sips,
And gently waved her golden head, inclin'd
Outside his cage close to the window-blind;
Till her fond bird, with little turns and dips,
Piped low to her of sweet companionships,
And when he made an end, some seed took she
And fed him from her tongue, which rosily
Peeped as a piercing bud between her lips.

And like the child in Chaucer, on whose tongue
The Blessed Mary laid, when he was dead,
A grain,—who straightway praised her name in song;
Even so, when she, a little lightly red,
Now turned on me and laughed, I heard the throng
Of inner voices praise her golden head.

A MATCH WITH THE MOON.

WEARY already, weary miles to-night
I walked for bed: and so, to get some ease,
I dogged the flying moon with similes.
And like a wisp she doubled on my sight
In ponds; and caught in tree-tops like a kite;
And in a globe of film all liquorish
Swam full-faced like a silly silver fish;—
Last like a bubble shot the welkin's height
Where my road turned, and got behind me, and sent
My wizened shadow craning round at me,
And jeered, "So, step the measure,—one two three!"—
And if I faced on her, looked innocent.
But just at parting, halfway down a dell,
She kissed me for good-night. So you'll not tell.

LOVE'S NOCTURN.

MASTER of the murmuring courts
Where the shapes of sleep convene!—
Lo! my spirit here exhorts
All the powers of thy demesne
For their aid to woo my queen.
What reports
Yield thy jealous courts unseen?

Vaporous, unaccountable,
  Dreamworld lies forlorn of light,
Hollow like a breathing shell.
  Ah! that from all dreams I might
  Choose one dream and guide its flight!
    I know well
  What her sleep should tell to-night.

There the dreams are multitudes:
  Some that will not wait for sleep,
Deep within the August woods;
  Some that hum while rest may steep
  Weary labor laid a-heap;
    Interludes,
  Some, of grievous moods that weep.

Poets' fancies all are there:
  There the elf-girls flood with wings
Valleys full of plaintive air;
  There breathe perfumes; there in rings
  Whirl the foam-bewildered springs;
    Siren there
  Winds her dizzy hair and sings.

Thence the one dream mutually
  Dreamed in bridal unison,
Less than waking ecstasy;
  Half-formed visions that make moan
  In the house of birth alone;
    And what we
  At death's wicket see, unknown.

But for mine own sleep, it lies
In one gracious form's control,
Fair with honorable eyes,
Lamps of a translucent soul:
O their glance is loftiest dole,
Sweet and wise,
Wherein Love descries his goal.

Reft of her, my dreams are all
Clammy trance that fears the sky:
Changing footpaths shift and fall;
From polluted coverts nigh,
Miserable phantoms sigh;
Quakes the pall,
And the funeral goes by.

Master, is it soothly said
That, as echoes of man's speech
Far in secret clefts are made,
So do all men's bodies reach
Shadows o'er thy sunken beach,—
Shape or shade
In those halls portrayed of each?

Ah! might I, by thy good grace
Groping in the windy stair,
(Darkness and the breath of space
Like loud waters everywhere,)
Meeting mine own image there
Face to face,
Send it from that place to her!

Nay, not I; but oh! do thou,
  Master, from thy shadowkind
Call my body's phantom now:
  Bid it bear its face declin'd
  Till its flight her slumbers find,
    And her brow
  Feel its presence bow like wind.

Where in groves the gracile Spring
  Trembles, with mute orison
Confidently strengthening,
  Water's voice and wind's as one
  Shed an echo in the sun.
    Soft as Spring,
  Master, bid it sing and moan.

Song shall tell how glad and strong
  Is the night she soothes alway;
Moan shall grieve with that parched tongue
  Of the brazen hours of day:
  Sounds as of the springtide they,
    Moan and song,
  While the chill months long for May.

Not the prayers which with all leave
  The world's fluent woes prefer,—
Not the praise the world doth give,
  Dulcet fulsome whisperer;—
  Let it yield my love to her,
    And achieve
  Strength that shall not grieve or err.

Wheresoe'er my dreams befall,
Both at night-watch, (let it say,)
And where round the sundial
The reluctant hours of day,
Heartless, hopeless of their way,
Rest and call ;—
There her glance doth fall and stay.

Suddenly her face is there :
So do mounting vapors wreathe
Subtle-scented transports where
The black firwood sets its teeth.
Part the boughs and look beneath,—
Lilies share
Secret waters there, and breathe.

Master, bid my shadow bend
Whispering thus till birth of light,
Lest new shapes that sleep may send
Scatter all its work to flight ;—
Master, master of the night,
Bid it spend
Speech, song, prayer, and end aright.

Yet, ah me ! if at her head
There another phantom lean
Murmuring o'er the fragrant bed,—
Ah ! and if my spirit's queen
Smile those alien prayers between,—
Ah ! poor shade !
Shall it strive, or fade unseen ?

How should love's own messenger
Strive with love and be love's foe ?
Master, nay ! If thus, in her,
Sleep a wedded heart should show,—
Silent let mine image go,
Its old share
Of thy spell-bound air to know.

Like a vapor wan and mute,
Like a flame, so let it pass ;
One low sigh across her lute,
One dull breath against her glass ;
And to my sad soul, alas !
One salute
Cold as when death's foot shall pass.

Then, too, let all hopes of mine,
All vain hopes by night and day,
Slowly at thy summoning sign
Rise up pallid and obey.
Dreams, if this is thus, were they :—
Be they thine,
And to dreamworld pine away.

Yet from old time, life, not death,
Master, in thy rule is rife :
Lo ! through thee, with mingling breath,
Adam woke beside his wife.
O Love bring me so, for strife,
Force and faith,
Bring me so not death but life !

Yea, to Love himself is pour'd
This frail song of hope and fear.
Thou art Love, of one accord
With kind Sleep to bring her near,
Still-eyed, deep-eyed, ah how dear!
Master, Lord,
In her name implor'd, O hear!

FIRST LOVE REMEMBERED.

Peace in her chamber, wheresoe'er
It be, a holy place:
The thought still brings my soul such grace
As morning meadows wear.

Whether it still be small and light,
A maid's who dreams alone,
As from her orchard-gate the moon
Its ceiling showed at night:

Or whether, in a shadow dense
As nuptial hymns invoke,
Innocent maidenhood awoke
To married innocence:

There still the thanks unheard await
The unconscious gift bequeathed:
For there my soul this hour has breathed
An air inviolate.

PLIGHTED PROMISE.

In a soft-complexioned sky,
Fleeting rose and kindling gray,
Have you seen Aurora fly
At the break of day?
So my maiden, so my plighted, may
Blushing cheek and gleaming eye
Lifts to look my way.

Where the inmost leaf is stirred
With the heart-beat of the grove,
Have you heard a hidden bird
Cast her note above?
So my lady, so my lovely love,
Echoing Cupid's prompted word,
Makes a tune thereof.

Have you seen, at heaven's mid-height,
In the moon-rack's ebb and tide,
Venus leap forth burning white,
Dian pale and hide?
So my bright breast-jewel, so my bride,
One sweet night, when fear takes flight,
Shall leap against my side.

SUDDEN LIGHT.

I have been here before,
But when or how I cannot tell:
I know the grass beyond the door,
The sweet keen smell,
The sighing sound, the lights around the shore.

You have been mine before,—
How long ago I may not know:
But just when at that swallow's soar
Your neck turned so,
Some veil did fall,—I knew it all of yore.

Has this been thus before?
And shall not thus time's eddying flight
Still with our lives our love restore
In death's despite,
And day and night yield one delight once more?

A NEW-YEAR'S BURDEN.

Along the grass sweet airs are blown
Our way this day in Spring.
Of all the songs that we have known
Now which one shall we sing?
Not that, my love, ah no!—
Not this, my love? why, so!—
Yet both were ours, but hours will come and go.

The grove is all a pale frail mist,
The new year sucks the sun.
Of all the kisses that we kissed
Now which shall be the one?
Not that, my love, ah no!—
Not this, my love?—heigh-ho
For all the sweets that all the winds can blow!

The branches cross above our eyes,
The skies are in a net:
And what's the thing beneath the skies
We two would most forget?
Not birth, my love, no, no,—
Not death, my love, no, no,—
The love once ours, but ours long hours ago.

EVEN SO.

So it is, my dear.
All such things touch secret strings
For heavy hearts to hear.
So it is, my dear.

Very like indeed :
Sea and sky, afar, on high,
Sand and strewn seaweed,—
Very like indeed.

But the sea stands spread
As one wall with the flat skies,
Where the lean black craft like flies
Seem well-nigh stagnated,
Soon to drop off dead.

Seemed it so to us
When I was thine and thou wast mine,
And all these things were thus,
But all our world in us ?

Could we be so now ?
Not if all beneath heaven's pall
Lay dead but I and thou,
Could we be so now !

THE WOODSPURGE.

The wind flapped loose, the wind was still,
Shaken out dead from tree and hill :
I had walked on at the wind's will,—
I sat now, for the wind was still.

Between my knees my forehead was,—
My lips, drawn in, said not Alas!
My hair was over in the grass,
My naked ears heard the day pass.

My eyes, wide open, had the run
Of some ten weeds to fix upon;
Among those few, out of the sun,
The woodspurge flowered, three cups in one.

From perfect grief there need not be
Wisdom or even memory:
One thing then learnt remains to me,
The woodspurge has a cup of three.

THE HONEYSUCKLE.

I PLUCKED a honeysuckle where
The hedge on high is quick with thorn,
And climbing for the prize, was torn,
And fouled my feet in quag-water;
And by the thorns and by the wind
The blossom that I took was thinn'd,
And yet I found it sweet and fair.

Thence to a richer growth I came,
Where, nursed in mellow intercourse,
The honeysuckles sprang by scores,
Not harried like my single stem,
All virgin lamps of scent and dew.
So from my hand that first I threw,
Yet plucked not any more of them.

DANTIS TENEBRÆ.

(*In Memory of my Father.*)

And didst thou know indeed, when at the font
Together with thy name thou gav'st me his,
That also on thy son must Beatrice
Decline her eyes according to her wont,
Accepting me to be of those that haunt
The vale of magical dark mysteries
Where to the hills her poet's foot-track lies
And wisdom's living fountain to his chaunt
Trembles in music? This is that steep land
Where he that holds his journey stands at gaze
Tow'rd sunset, when the clouds like a new height
Seem piled to climb. These things I understand:
For here, where day still soothes my lifted face,
On thy bowed head, my father, fell the night.

WORDS ON THE WINDOW-PANE.*

Did she in summer write it, or in spring,
Or with this wail of autumn at her ears,
Or in some winter left among old years
Scratched it through tettered cark? A certain thing
That round her heart the frost was hardening,
Not to be thawed of tears, which on this pane
Channelled the rime, perchance, in fevered rain,
For false man's sake and love's most bitter sting.

* For a woman's fragmentary inscription.

Howbeit, between this last word and the next
Unwritten, subtly seasoned was the smart,
And here at least the grace to weep : if she,
Rather, midway in her disconsolate text,
Rebelled not, loathing from the trodden heart
That thing which she had found man's love to be.

AN OLD SONG ENDED.

"How should I your true love know
From another one?"
"By his cockle-hat and staff
And his sandal-shoon."

"And what signs have told you now
That he hastens home?"
"Lo! the spring is nearly gone,
He is nearly come."

"For a token is there nought,
Say, that he should bring?"
"He will bear a ring I gave
And another ring."

"How may I, when he shall ask,
Tell him who lies there?"
"Nay, but leave my face unveiled
And unbound my hair."

"Can you say to me some word
I shall say to him?"
"Say I'm looking in his eyes
Though my eyes are dim."

THE SONG OF THE BOWER.

Say, is it day, is it dusk in thy bower,
Thou whom I long for, who longest for me?
Oh! be it light, be it night, 'tis Love's hour,
Love's that is fettered as Love's that is free,
Free Love has leaped to that innermost chamber,
Oh! the last time, and the hundred before:
Fettered Love, motionless, can but remember,
Yet something that sighs from him passes the door.

Nay, but my heart when it flies to thy bower,
What does it find there that knows it again?
There it must droop like a shower-beaten flower,
Red at the rent core and dark with the rain.
Ah! yet what shelter is still shed above it,—
What waters still image its leaves torn apart?
Thy soul is the shade that clings round it to love it,
And tears are its mirror deep down in thy heart.

What were my prize, could I enter thy bower,
This day, to-morrow, at eve or at morn?
Large lovely arms and a neck like a tower,
Bosom then heaving that now lies forlorn.
Kindled with love-breath, (the sun's kiss is colder!)
Thy sweetness all near me, so distant to-day;
My hand round thy neck and thy hand on my shoulder
My mouth to thy mouth as the world melts away.

What is it keeps me afar from thy bower,—
My spirit, my body, so fain to be there?
Waters engulfing or fires that devour?—
Earth heaped against me or death in the air?

Nay, but in day-dreams, for terror, for pity,
The trees wave their heads with an omen to tell;
Nay, but in night-dreams, throughout the dark city,
The hours, clasped together, lose count in the bell.

Shall I not one day remember thy bower,
One day when all days are one day to me?—
Thinking, "I stirred not, and yet had the power!"—
Yearning, "Ah God, if again it might be!"
Peace, peace! such a small lamp illumes, on this highway,
So dimly so few steps in front of my feet,—
Yet shows me that her way is parted from my way. . . .
Out of sight, beyond light, at what goal may we meet?

DAWN ON THE NIGHT-JOURNEY.

Till dawn the wind drove round me. It is past
And still, and leaves the air to lisp of bird,
And to the quiet that is almost heard
Of the new-risen day, as yet bound fast
In the first warmth of sunrise. When the last
Of the sun's hours to-day shall be fulfilled,
There shall another breath of time be stilled
For me, which now is to my senses cast
As much beyond me as eternity,
Unknown, kept secret. On the newborn air
The moth quivers in silence. It is vast,
Yea, even beyond the hills upon the sea,
The day whose end shall give this hour as sheer
As chaos to the irrevocable Past.

* Hitherto unpublished.

A LITTLE WHILE.

A LITTLE while a little love
The hour yet bears for thee and me
Who have not drawn the veil to see
If still our heaven be lit above.
Thou merely, at the day's last sigh,
Hast felt thy soul prolong the tone;
And I have heard the night-wind cry
And deemed its speech mine own.

A little while a little love
The scattering autumn hoards for us
Whose bower is not yet ruinous
Nor quite unleaved our songless grove.
Only across the shaken boughs
We hear the flood-tides seek the sea,
And deep in both our hearts they rouse
One wail for thee and me.

A little while a little love
May yet be ours who have not said
The word it makes our eyes afraid
To know that each is thinking of.
Not yet the end: be our lips dumb
In smiles a little season yet:
I'll tell thee, when the end is come,
How we may best forget.

TROY TOWN.

HEAVENBORN HELEN, Sparta's queen,
(*O Troy Town!*)
Had two breasts of heavenly sheen,
The sun and moon of the heart's desire:
All Love's lordship lay between.
(*O Troy's down,*)
Tall Troy's on fire!)

Helen knelt at Venus' shrine,
(*O Troy Town!*)
Saying, "A little gift is mine,
A little gift for a heart's desire.
Hear me speak and make me a sign!
(*O Troy's down,*
Tall Troy's on fire!)

"Look, I bring thee a carven cup;
(*O Troy Town!*)
See it here as I hold it up,—
Shaped it is to the heart's desire,
Fit to fill when the gods would sup.
(*O Troy's down,*
Tall Troy's on fire!)

"It was moulded like my breast;
(*O Troy Town!*)
He that sees it may not rest,
Rest at all for his heart's desire.
O give ear to my heart's behest!
(*O Troy's down,*
Tall Troy's on fire!)

"See my breast, how like it is;
(*O Troy Town!*)
See it bare for the air to kiss!
Is the cup to thy heart's desire?
O for the breast, O make it his!
(*O Troy's down!,*
Tall Troy's on fire!)

"Yea, for my bosom here I sue;
(*O Troy Town!*)
Thou must give it where 'tis due,
Give it there to the heart's desire.
Whom do I give my bosom to?
(*O Troy's down,*
Tall Troy's on fire!)

"Each twin breast is an apple sweet,
(*O Troy Town!*)
Once an apple stirred the beat
Of thy heart with the heart's desire:—
Say, who brought it then to thy feet?
(*O Troy's down,*
Tall Troy's on fire!)

"They that claimed it then were three:
(*O Troy Town!*)
For thy sake two hearts did he
Make forlorn of the heart's desire.
Do for him as he did for thee!
(*O Troy's down,*
Tall Troy's on fire!)

"Mine are apples grown to the south,
(*O Troy Town!*)
Grown to taste in the days of drouth,
Taste and waste to the heart's desire:
Mine are apples meet for his mouth."
(*O Troy's down,*
Tall Troy's on fire!)

Venus looked on Helen's gift
(*O Troy Town!*)
Looked and smiled with subtle drift,
Saw the work of her heart's desire:—
"There thou kneel'st for Love to lift!"
(*O Troy's down,*
Tall Troy's on fire!)

Venus looked in Helen's face,
(*O Troy Town!*)
Knew far off an hour and place,
And fire lit from the heart's desire;
Laughed and said, "Thy gift hath grace!"
(*O Troy's down,*
Tall Troy's on fire!)

Cupid looked on Helen's breast,
(*O Troy Town!*)
Saw the heart within its nest,
Saw the flame of the heart's desire,—
Marked his arrow's burning crest.
(*O Troy's down,*
Tall Troy's on fire!)

Cupid took another dart,
(*O Troy Town!*)
Fledged it for another heart,
Winged the shaft with the heart's desire,
Drew the string and said, "Depart!"
(*O Troy's down,*
Tall Troy's on fire!)

Paris turned upon his bed,
(*O Troy Town!*)
Turned upon his bed and said,
Dead at heart with the heart's desire—
"Oh to clasp her golden head!"
(*O Troy's down,*
Tall Troy's on fire!)

EDEN BOWER.

It was Lilith the wife of Adam:
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
Not a drop of her head was human,
But she was made like a soft sweet woman.

Lilith stood on the skirts of Eden;
(*Alas the hour!*)
She was the first that thence was driven;
With her was hell and with Eve was heaven.

In the ear of the Snake said Lilith:—
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
"To thee I come when the rest is over;
A snake was I when thou wast my lover.

"I was the fairest snake in Eden:
(*Alas the hour!*)
By the earth's will, new form and feature
Made me a wife for the earth's new creature.

"Take me thou as I come from Adam:
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
Once again shall my love subdue thee;
The past is past and I am come to thee.

"O but Adam was thrall to Lilith!
(*Alas the hour!*)
All the threads of my hair are golden,
And there in a net his heart was holden.

"O and Lilith was queen of Adam!
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
All the day and the night together
My breath could shake his soul like a feather.

"What great joys had Adam and Lilith!—
(*Alas the hour!*)
Sweet close rings of the serpent's twining,
As heart in heart lay sighing and pining.

"What bright babes had Lilith and Adam!
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
Shapes that coiled in the woods and waters,
Glittering sons and radiant daughters.

"O thou God, the Lord God of Eden!
(*Alas the hour!*)
Say, was this fair body for no man,
That of Adam's flesh thou mak'st him a woman?

"O thou Snake, the King-snake of Eden!
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
God's strong will our necks are under,
But thou and I may cleave it in sunder.

"Help, sweet Snake, sweet lover of Lilith!
(*Alas the hour!*)
And let God learn how I loved and hated
Man in the image of God created.

"Help me once against Eve and Adam!
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
Help me once for this one endeavor,
And then my love shall be thine forever!

"Strong is God, the fell foe of Lilith:
(*Alas the hour!*)
Nought in heaven or earth may affright Him;
But join thou with me and we will smite Him.

"Strong is God, the great God of Eden:
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
Over all He made He hath power;
But lend me thou thy shape for an hour!

"Lend thy shape for the love of Lilith!
(*Alas the hour!*)
Look, my mouth and my cheek are ruddy,
And thou art cold, and fire is my body.

"Lend thy shape for the hate of Adam!
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
That he may wail my joy that forsook him,
And curse the day when the bride-sleep took him.

"Lend thy shape for the shame of Eden!
(*Alas the hour!*)
Is not the foe-God weak as the foeman
When love grows hate in the heart of a woman?

"Wouldst thou know the heart's hope of Lilith?
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
Then bring thou close thine head till it glisten
Along my breast, and lip me and listen.

"Am I sweet, O sweet Snake of Eden?
(*Alas the hour!*)
Then ope thine ear to my warm mouth's cooing
And learn what deed remains for our doing.

"Thou didst hear when God said to Adam:—
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
'Of all this wealth I have made thee warden;
Thou'rt free to eat of the trees of the garden:

"'Only of one tree eat not in Eden;
(*Alas the hour!*)
All save one I give to thy freewill,—
The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.'

"O my love, come nearer to Lilith!
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
In thy sweet folds bind me and bend me,
And let me feel the shape thou shalt lend me.

"In thy shape I'll go back to Eden;
(*Alas the hour!*)
In these coils that Tree will I grapple,
And stretch this crowned head forth by the apple.

"Lo, Eve bends to the breath of Lilith!
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
O how then shall my heart desire
All her blood as food to its fire!

"Lo, Eve bends to the words of Lilith!—
(*Alas the hour!*)
'Nay, this Tree's fruit,—why should ye hate it,
Or Death be born the day that ye ate it?

"'Nay, but on that great day in Eden,
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
By the help that in this wise Tree is,
God knows well ye shall be as He is.'

"Then Eve shall eat and give unto Adam;
(*Alas the hour!*)
And then they both shall know they are naked,
And their hearts ache as my heart hath achèd.

"Ay, let them hide 'mid the trees of Eden,
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
As in the cool of the day in the garden
God shall walk without pity or pardon.

"Hear, thou Eve, the man's heart in Adam!
(*Alas the hour!*)
Of his brave words hark to the bravest:—
'This the woman gave that thou gavest.'

"Hear Eve speak, yea list to her, Lilith!
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
Feast thine heart with words that shall sate it—
'This the serpent gave and I ate it."

"O proud Eve, cling close to thine Adam,
(*Alas the hour!*)
Driven forth as the beasts of his naming
By the sword that forever is flaming.

"Know, thy path is known unto Lilith!
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
While the blithe birds sang at thy wedding,
There her tears grew thorns for thy treading.

"O my love, thou Love-snake of Eden!
(*Alas the hour!*)
O to-day and the day to come after!
Loose me, love,—give breath to my laughter.

"O bright Snake, the Death-worm of Adam!
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
Wreathe thy neck with my hair's bright tether,
And wear my gold and thy gold together!

"On that day on the skirts of Eden,
(*Alas the hour!*)
In thy shape shall I glide back to thee,
And in my shape for an instant view thee.

"But when thou'rt thou and Lilith is Lilith,
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
In what bliss past hearing or seeing
Shall each one drink of the other's being!

"With cries of 'Eve!' and 'Eden!' and 'Adam!'
(*Alas the hour!*)
How shall we mingle our love's caresses,
I in thy coils, and thou in my tresses!

"With those names, ye echoes of Eden,
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
Fire shall cry from my heart that burneth,—
'Dust he is and to dust returneth!'

"Yet to-day, thou master of Lilith,—
(*Alas the hour!*)
Wrap me round in the form I'll borrow
And let me tell thee of sweet to-morrow.

"In the planted garden eastward in Eden,
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
Where the river goes forth to water the garden,
The springs shall dry and the soil shall harden.

"Yea, where the bride-sleep fell upon Adam,
(*Alas the hour!*)
None shall hear when the storm-wind whistles
Through roses choked among thorns and thistles.

"Yea, beside the east-gate of Eden,
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
Where God joined them and none might sever,
The sword turns this way and that forever.

"What of Adam cast out of Eden?
(*Alas the hour!*)
Lo! with care like a shadow shaken,
He tills the hard earth whence he was taken.

"What of Eve too, cast out of Eden?
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
Nay, but she, the bride of God's giving,
Must yet be mother of all men living.

"Lo, God's grace, by the grace of Lilith!
(*Alas the hour!*)
To Eve's womb, from our sweet to-morrow,
God shall greatly multiply sorrow.

"Fold me fast, O God-snake of Eden!
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
What more prize than love to impel thee?
Grip and lip my limbs as I tell thee!

"Lo! two babes for Eve and for Adam!
(*Alas the hour!*)
Lo! sweet Snake, the travail and treasure,—
Two men-children born for their pleasure!

"The first is Cain and the second Abel:
(*Sing Eden Bower!*)
The soul of one shall be made thy brother,
And thy tongue shall lap the blood of the other."
(*Alas the hour!*)

LOVE LILY.

Between the hands, between the brows,
Between the lips of Love-Lily,
A spirit is born whose birth endows
My blood with fire to burn through me;
Who breathes upon my gazing eyes,
Who laughs and murmurs in mine ear,
At whose least touch my color flies,
And whom my life grows faint to hear.

Within the voice, within the heart,
  Within the mind of Love-Lily,
A spirit is born who lifts apart
  His tremulous wings and looks at me;
Who on my mouth his finger lays,
  And shows, while whispering lutes confer,
That Eden of Love's watered ways
  Whose winds and spirits worship her.

Brows, hands, and lips, heart, mind, and voice,
  Kisses and words of Love-Lily,—
Oh! bid me with your joy rejoice
  Till riotous longing rest in me!
Ah! let not hope be still distraught,
  But find in her its gracious goal,
Whose speech Truth knows not from her thought
  Nor Love her body from her soul.

SUNSET WINGS.

To-night this sunset spreads two golden wings
  Cleaving the western sky;
Winged too with wind it is, and winnowings
Of birds; as if the day's last hour in rings
  Of strenuous flight must die.

Sun-steeped in fire, the homeward pinions sway
  Above the dovecote-tops;
And clouds of starlings, ere they rest with day,
Sink, clamorous like mill-waters, at wild play,
  By turns in every copse:

Each tree heart-deep the wrangling rout receives,—
  Save for the whirr within,
You could not tell the starlings from the leaves;
Then one great puff of wings, and the swarm heaves
  Away with all its din.

Even thus Hope's hours, in ever-eddying flight,
  To many a refuge tend;
With the first light she laughed, and the last light
Glows round her still; who natheless in the night
  At length must make an end.

And now the mustering rooks innumerable
  Together sail and soar,
While for the day's death, like a tolling knell,
Unto the heart they seem to cry, Farewell,
  No more, farewell, no more!

Hope not plumed, as 'twere a fiery dart?
  And oh! thou dying day,
Even as thou goest must she too depart,
And sorrow fold such pinions on the heart
  As will not fly away?

THE CLOUD CONFINES.

The day is dark and the night
  To him that would search their heart;
  No lips of cloud that will part
Nor morning song in the light:

Only, gazing alone,
To him wild shadows are shown,
Deep under deep unknown
And height above unknown height.
Still we say as we go,—
"Strange to think by the way,
Whatever there is to know,
That shall we know one day."

The Past is over and fled;
Named new, we name it the old;
Thereof some tale hath been told,
But no word comes from the dead;
Whether at all they be,
Or whether as bond or free,
Or whether they too were we,
Or by what spell they have sped.
Still we say as we go,—
"Strange to think by the way,
Whatever there is to know,
That shall we know one day."

What of the heart of hate
That beats in thy breast, O Time?—
Red strife from the furthest prime,
And anguish of fierce debate;
War that shatters her slain,
And peace that grinds them as grain,
And eyes fixed ever in vain
On the pitiless eyes of Fate.
Still we say as we go,—
"Strange to think by the way,
Whatever there is to know,
That shall we know one day."

What of the heart of love
That bleeds in thy breast, O Man ?—
Thy kisses snatched 'neath the ban
Of fangs that mock them above ;
Thy bells prolonged unto knells,
Thy hope that a breath dispels,
Thy bitter forlorn farewells
And the empty echoes thereof ?
Still we say as we go,—
"Strange to think by the way,
Whatever there is to know,
That shall we know one day."

The sky leans dumb on the sea,
Aweary with all its wings ;
And oh ! the song the sea sings
Is dark everlastingly.
Our past is clean forgot,
Our present is and is not,
Our future's a sealed seedplot,
And what betwixt them are we ?—
We who say as we go,—
"Strange to think by the way,
Whatever there is to know,
That shall we know one day."

DOWN STREAM.

Between Holmscote and Hurstcote
The river-reaches wind,
The whispering trees accept the breeze,
The ripple's cool and kind :

With love low-whispered 'twixt the shores,
  With rippling laughters gay,
With white arms bared to ply the oars,
  On last year's first of May.

Between Holmscote and Hurtscote
  The river's brimmed with rain,
Through close-met banks and parted banks
  Now near, now far again:
With parting tears caressed to smiles,
  With meeting promised soon,
With every sweet vow that beguiles,
  On last year's first of June.

Between Holmscote and Hurstcote
  The river's flecked with foam,
'Neath shuddering clouds that hang in shrouds
  And lost winds wild for home:
With infant wailings at the breast,
  With homeless steps astray,
With wanderings shuddering tow'rds one rest
  On this year's first of May.

Between Holmscote and Hurstcote
  The summer river flaws
With doubled flight of moons by night
  And lilies' deep repose:
With lo! beneath the moon's white stare
  A white face not the moon,
With lilies meshed in tangled hair,
  On this year's first of June.

Between Holmscote and Hurstcote
  A troth was given and riven,
From heart's trust grew one life to two,
  Two lost lives cry to Heaven:

With banks spread calm to meet the sky,
The harvest-paths of glad July,
With meadows newly mowed,
The sweet school-children's road.

THREE SHADOWS.

I LOOKED and saw your eyes
In the shadow of your hair
As a traveller sees the stream
In the shadow of the wood;
And I said, "My faint heart sighs
Ah me! to linger there,
To drink deep and to dream
In that sweet solitude."

I looked and saw your heart
In the shadow of your eyes,
As a seeker sees the gold
In the shadow of the stream;
And I said, "Ah me! what art
Should win the immortal prize,
Whose want must make life cold
And Heaven a hollow dream?"

I looked and saw your love
In the shadow of your heart,
As a diver sees the pearl
In the shadow of the sea;
And I murmured, not above
My breath, but all apart,—
"Ah! you can love, true girl,
And is your love for me?"

A DEATH-PARTING.

Leaves and rain and the days of the year,
(*Water-willow and wellaway.*)
All these fall, and my soul gives ear,
And she is hence who once was here.
(*With a wind blown night and day.*)

Ah! but now, for a secret sign,
(*The willow's wan and the water white,*)
In the held breath of the day's decline
Her very face seemed pressed to mine.
(*With a wind blown day and night.*)

O love, of my death my life is fain;
(*The willows wave on the water-way,*)
Your cheek and mine are cold in the rain,
But warm they'll be when we meet again,
(*With a wind blown night and day.*)

Mists are heaved and cover the sky;
The willows wail in the waning light,)
O loose your lips, leave space for a sigh,—
They seal my soul, I cannot die,
(*With a wind blown day and night.*)

Leaves and rain and the days of the year,
(*Water-willow and wellaway,*)
All still fall, and I still give ear,
And she is hence, and I am here.
(*With a wind blown night and day.*)

SPRING.

Soft-littered is the new-year's lambing-fold,
And in the hollowed haystack at its side
The shepherd lies o' night now, wakeful-eyed
At the ewes' travailing call though the dark cold.
The young rooks cheep 'mid the thick caw o' the old:
And near unpeopled stream-sides, on the ground,
By her Spring cry the moorhen's nest is found,
Where the drained flood-lands flaunt their marigold.

Chill are the gusts to which the pastures cower,
And chill the current where the young reeds stand
As green and close as the young wheat on land:
Yet here the cuckoo and cuckoo-flower
Plight to the heart Spring's perfect imminent hour
Whose breath shall soothe you like your dear one's hand.

UNTIMELY LOST.

Oliver Madox Brown. Born 1855; Died 1874.

Upon the landscape of his coming life
A youth high-gifted gazed, and found it fair:
The heights of work, the floods of praise, were there.
What friendships, what desires, what love, what wife?—
All things to come. The fauned springtide was rife.
With imminent solstice; and the ardent air
Had summer sweets and autumn fires to bear,—
Heart's ease full-pulsed with perfect strength for strife.

A mist has risen ; we see the youth no more :
  Does he see on and strive on ? And may we
  Late-tottering world-worn hence, find *his* to be
The young strong hand which helps us up that shore ?
Or, echoing the No More with Nevermore,
Must Night be ours and his ? We hope : and he ?

PARTED PRESENCE.

Love, I speak to your heart,
  Your heart that is always here.
  Oh draw me deep to its sphere.
Though you and I are apart ;
And yield, by the spirit's art,
  Each distant gift that is dear.
  O love, my love, you are here !

Your eyes are afar to-day,
  Yet, love, look now in mine eyes.
  Two hearts sent forth may despise
All dead things by the way.
All between is decay,
  Dead hours and this hour that dies
  O love, look deep in mine eyes !

Your hands to-day are not here,
  Yet lay them, love, in my hands.
  The hourglass sheds its sands
All day for the dead hours' bier ;
But now, as two hearts draw near,
  This hour like a flower expands.
  O love, your hands in my hands !

Your voice is not on the air,
  Yet, love, I can hear your voice:
  It bids my heart to rejoice
As knowing your heart is there,—
A music sweet to declare
  The truth of your steadfast choice.
  O love, how sweet is your voice!

To-day your lips are afar,
  Yet draw my lips to them, love.
  Around, beneath, and above,
Is frost to bind and to bar;
But where I am and you are,
  Desire and the fire thereof.
  O kiss me, kiss me, my love!

Your heart is never away,
  But ever with mine, forever,
  Forever without endeavor,
To-morrow, love, as to-day;
Two blent hearts never astray,
  Two souls no power may sever,
  Together, O my love, forever!

SPHERAL CHANGE.

In this new shade of Death, the show
  Passes me still of form and face;
Some bent, some gazing as they go,
  Some swiftly, some at a dull pace,
Not one that speaks in any case.

If only one might speak !—the one
Who never waits till I come near ;
But always seated all alone
As listening to the sunken air,
Is gone before I come to her.

O dearest ! while we lived and died
A living death in every day,
Some hours we still were side by side,
When where I was you too might stay
And rest and need not go away.

O nearest, furthest ! Can there be
At length some hard-earned heart-won home,
Where,—exile changed for sanctuary,—
Our lot may fill indeed its sum,
And you may wait and I may come ?

ALAS, SO LONG !

Ah ! dear one, we were young so long,
It seemed that youth would never go,
For skies and trees were ever in song
And water in singing flow
In the days we never again shall know.
Alas, so long !
Ah ! then was it all Spring weather ?
Nay, but we were young together.

Ah ! dear one, I've been old so long,
It seems that age is loth to part,

Though days and years have never a song,
And oh! have they still the art
That warmed the pulses of heart to heart?
Alas, so long!
Ah! then was it all Spring weather?
Nay, but we were young and together.

Ah! dear one, you've been dead so long,—
How long until we meet again,
Where hours may never lose their song
Nor flowers forget the rain
In glad noonlight that never shall wane?
Alas, so long!
Ah! shall it be then Spring weather,
And ah! shall we be young together?

INSOMNIA.

Thin are the night-skirts left behind
By daybreak hours that onward creep,
And thin, alas! the shred of sleep
That wavers with the spirit's wind:
But in half-dreams that shift and roll
And still remember and forget,
My soul this hour has drawn your soul
A little nearer yet.

Our lives, most dear, are never near,
Our thoughts are never far apart,
Though all that draws us heart to heart
Seems fainter now and now more clear.
To-night Love claims his full control,
And with desire and with regret
My soul this hour has drawn your soul
A little nearer yet

Is there a home where heavy earth
  Melts to bright air that breathes no pain,
  Where water leaves no thirst again
And springing fire is Love's new birth ?
If faith long bound to one true goal
  May there at length its hope beget,
My soul that hour shall draw your soul
    Forever nearer yet.

POSSESSION.

There is a cloud above the sunset hill,
  That wends and makes no stay,
For its goal lies beyond the fiery west ;
A lingering breath no calm can chase away,
The onward labor of the wind's last will ;
A flying foam that overleaps the crest
Of the top wave : and in possession still
A further reach of longing ; though at rest
  From all the yearning years,
Together in the bosom of that day
Ye cling, and with your kisses drink your tears.

CHIMES.

I.

Honey-flowers to the honey-comb
And the honey-bee's from home.

A honey-comb and a honey-flower,
And the bee shall have his hour.

A honeyed heart for the honey-comb,
And the humming bee flies home.

A heavy heart in the honey-flower,
And the bee has had his hour.

II.

A honey cell's in the honeysuckle,
And the honey-bee knows it well.

The honey-comb has a heart of honey,
And the humming bee's so bonny.

A honey-flower's the honeysuckle,
And the bee's in the honey-bell.

The honeysuckle is sucked of honey,
And the bee is heavy and bonny.

III.

Brown shell first for the butterfly
And a bright wing by and by.

Butterfly, good-bye to your shell,
And, bright wings, speed you well.

Bright lamplight for the butterfly
And a burnt wing by and by.

Butterfly, alas for your shell,
And, bright wings, fare you well.

IV.

Lost love-labor and lullaby,
And lowly let love lie.

Lost love-morrow and love-fellow
And love's life lying low.

Lovelor labor and life laid by
And lowly let love lie.

Late love-longing and life-sorrow
And love's life lying low.

V.

Beauty's body and benison
With a bosom-flower new blown.

Bitter beauty and blessing bann'd
With a breast to burn and brand.

Beauty's bower in the dust o'erblown
With a bare white breast of bone.

Barren beauty and bower of sand
With a blast on either hand.

VI.

Buried bars in the breakwater
And bubble of the brimming weir.

Body's blood in the breakwater
And a buried body's bier.

Buried bones in the breakwater
And bubble of the brawling weir.

Bitter tears in the breakwater
And a breaking heart to bear.

VII.

Hollow heaven and the hurricane
And hurry of the heavy rain.

Hurried clouds in the hollow heaven
And a heavy rain hard-driven.

The heavy rain it hurries amain
And heaven and the hurricane.

Hurrying wind o'er the heaven's hollow
And the heavy rain to follow.

ADIEU.

Waving whispering trees,
What do you say to the breeze
And what says the breeze to you?
'Mid passing souls ill at ease,
Moving murmuring trees,
Would ye ever wave an Adieu?

Tossing turbulent seas,
Winds that wrestle with these,
Echo heard in the shell,—
'Mid fleeting life ill at ease,
Restless ravening seas,—
Would the echo sigh Farewell?

Surging sumptuous skies,
For ever a new surprise,
Clouds eternally new,—
Is every flake that flies,
Widening wandering skies,
For a sign—Farewell, Adieu?

Sinking suffering heart
That know'st how weary thou art,—
Soul so fain for a flight,—
Aye, spread your wings to depart,
Sad soul and sorrowing heart,—
Adieu, Farewell, Good-night.

SOOTHSAY.

Let no man ask thee of anything
Not yearborn between Spring and Spring.
More of all worlds than he can know,
Each day the single sun doth show.
A trustier gloss than thou canst give
From all wise scrolls demonstrative,
The sea doth sigh and the wind sing.

Let no man awe thee on any height
Of earthly kingship's mouldering might,
The dust his heel holds meet for thy brow
Hath all of it been what both are now;
And thou and he may plague together
A beggar's eyes in some dusty weather
When none that is now knows sound or sight,

Crave thou no dower of earthly things
Unworthy Hope's imaginings.
To have brought true birth of Song to be
And to have won hearts to Poesy,
Or anywhere in the sun or rain
To have loved and been beloved again,
Is loftiest reach of Hope's bright wings.

The wild waifs cast up by the sea
Are diverse ever seasonably.
Even so the soul-tides still may land
A different drift upon the sand.
But one the sea is evermore:
And one be still, 'twixt shore and shore,
As the sea's life, thy soul in thee.

Say, hast thou pride ? How then may fit
Thy mood with flatterers' silk-spun wit ?
Haply the sweet voice lifts thy crest,
A breeze of fame made manifest.
Nay, but then chaf'st at flattery ? Pause :
Be sure thy wrath is not because
It makes thee feel thou lovest it.

Let thy soul strive that still the same
Be early friendship's sacred flame.
The affinities have strongest part
In youth, and draw men heart to heart :
As life wears on and finds no rest,
The individual in each breast
Is tyrannous to sunder them.

In the life-drama's stern cue-call,
A friend's a part well-prized by all :
And if thou meet an enemy,
What art thou that none such should be ?
Even so : but if the two parts run
Into each other and grow one,
Then comes the curtain's cue to fall.

Whate'er by other's need is claimed
More than by thine,—to him unblamed
Resign it : and if he should hold
What more than he thou lack'st, bread, gold,
Or any good whereby we live,—
To thee such substance let him give
Freely : nor he nor thou be shamed.

Strive that thy works prove equallest :
That work which thou hast done the best

Should come to be to thee at length
(Even as to envy seems the strength
Of others) hateful and abhorr'd,—
Thine own above thyself made lord,—
Of self-rebuke the bitterest.

Unto the man of yearning thought
And aspiration, to do nought
Is in itself almost an act,—
Being chasm-fire and cataract
Of the soul's utter depths unseal'd,
Yet woe to thee if once thou yield
Unto the act of doing nought!

How callous seems beyond revoke
The clock with its last listless stroke!
How much too late at length!—to trace
The hour on its forewarning face,
The thing thou hast not dared to do!.
Behold, this *may* be thus! Ere true
It prove, arise and bear thy yoke.

Let lore of all Theology
Be to thy soul what it *can* be:
But know,—the Power that fashions man
Measured not out thy little span
For thee to take the meting-rod
In turn, and so approve on God
Thy science of Theometry.

To God at best, to Chance at worst,
Give thanks for good things, last as first.
But windstrown blossom is that good
Whose apple is not gratitude.
Even if no prayer uplift thy face,
Let the sweet right to render grace
As thy soul's cherished child be nurs'd.

Didst ever say, "Lo, I forget"?
Such thought was to remember yet,
As in a gravegarth, count to see
The monuments of memory.
Be this thy soul's appointed scope:—
Gaze onward without claim to hope,
Nor, gazing backward, court regret.

FIVE ENGLISH POETS.

I. THOMAS CHATTERTON.

With Shakspeare's manhood at a boy's wild heart,—
Through Hamlet's doubt to Shakspeare near allied,
And kin to Milton through his Satan's pride,—
At Death's sole door he stooped, and craved a dart;
And to the dear new bower of England's art,—
Even to that shrine Time else had deified,
The unuttered heart that soared against his side,—
Drove the fell point, and smote life's seals apart.

Thy nested home-loves, noble Chatterton;
The angel-trodden stair thy soul could trace
Up Redcliffe's spire; and in the world's armed space
Thy gallant sword-play:—these to many an one
Are sweet forever; as thy grave unknown
And love-dream of thine unrecorded face.

II. WILLIAM BLAKE.

(TO FREDERICK SHIELDS, ON HIS SKETCH OF BLAKE'S WORK-ROOM AND DEATH-ROOM, 3 FOUNTAIN COURT, STRAND.)

This is the place. Even here the dauntless soul,
The unflinching hand, wrought on; till in that nook,
As on that very bed, his life partook
New birth, and passed. Yon river's dusky shoal,

Whereto the close-built coiling lanes unroll,
Faced his work-window, whence his eyes would stare,
Thought-wandering, unto nought that met them there,
But to the unfettered irreversible goal.

This cupboard, Holy of Holies, held the cloud
Of his soul writ and limned ; this other one,
His true wife's charge, full oft to their abode
Yielded for daily bread the martyr's stone,
Ere yet their food might be that Bread alone,
The words now home-speech of the mouth of God.

III. SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE.

His Soul fared forth (as from the deep home-grove
The father-songster plies the hour-long quest),
To feed his soul-brood hungering in the nest ;
But his warm Heart, the mother-bird, above
Their callow fledgling progeny still hove
With tented roof of wings and fostering breast
Till the Soul fed the soul-brood. Richly blest
From Heaven their growth, whose food was Human Love.
Yet ah ! Like desert pools that show the stars
Once in long leagues,—even such the scarce-snatched hours
Which deepening pain left to his lordliest powers :—
Heaven lost through spider-trammelled prison-bars.
Six years, from sixty saved ! Yet kindling skies
Own them, a beacon to our centuries.

IV. JOHN KEATS.

The weltering London ways where children weep
And girls whom none call maidens laugh,—strange road
Miring his outward steps, who inly trode
The bright Castalian brink and Latmos' steep :—

Even such his life's cross-paths ; till deathly deep
He toiled through sands of Lethe ; and long pain,
Weary with labor spurned and love found vain,
In dead Rome's sheltering shadow wrapped his sleep.

O pang-dowered Poet, whose reverberant lips
And heart-strung lyre awoke the Moon's eclipse,—
Thou whom the daisies glory in growing o'er,—
Their fragrance clings around thy name, not writ
But rumor'd in water, while the fame of it
Along Time's flood goes echoing evermore.

V. PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

(INSCRIPTION FOR THE COUCH, STILL PRESERVED, ON WHICH HE PASSED THE LAST NIGHT OF HIS LIFE.)

'TWIXT those twin worlds,—the world of Sleep, which gave
No dream to warn,—the tidal world of Death,
Which the earth's sea, as the earth, replenisheth,—
Shelley, Song's orient sun, to breast the wave,
Rose from his couch that morn. Ah ! did he brave
Only the sea ?—or did man's deed of hell
Engulph his bark 'mid mists impenetrable ? . . .
No eye discerned, nor any power might save.

When that mist cleared, O Shelley ! what dread veil
Was rent for thee, to whom far-darkling Truth
Reigned sovereign guide through thy brief ageless youth ?
Was the Truth *thy* Truth, Shelley ?—Hush ! All-Hail,
Past doubt, thou gav'st it; and in Truth's bright sphere
Art first of praisers, being most praisèd here.

TO PHILIP BOURKE MARSTON,*
INCITING ME TO POETIC WORK.

Sweet Poet, thou of whom these years that roll
  Must one day yet the burdened birthright learn,
  And by the darkness of thine eyes discern
How piercing was the sight within thy soul;—
Gifted apart, thou goest to the great goal,
  A cloud-bound radiant spirit, strong to earn,
  Light-reft, that prize for which fond myriads yearn
Vainly light-blest,—the Seër's aureole.

And doth thine ear, divinely dowered to catch
  All spheral sounds in thy song blent so well,
  Still hearken for my voice's slumbering spell
With wistful love? Ah! let the Muse now snatch
My wreath for thy young brows, and bend to watch
  Thy veiled transfiguring sense's miracle.

TIBER, NILE, AND THAMES.

The head and hands of murdered Cicero,
  Above his seat high in the Forum hung,
  Drew jeers and burning tears. When on the rung
Of a swift-mounted ladder, all aglow,
Fulvia, Mark Antony's shameless wife, with show
  Of foot firm-poised and gleaming arm upflung,
  Bade her sharp needle pierce that god-like tongue
Whose speech fed Rome even as the Tiber's flow.

* This sonnet was printed in Mr. William Sharp's book, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti, a Record and a Study.* In line 4 he gives the word "sight." In the MS. in my own possession I find "light" instead; but I incline to think that Mr. Sharp's version is correct.

And thou, Cleopatra's Needle, that hadst thrid
Great skirts of Time ere she and Antony hid
  Dead hope !—hast thou too reached, surviving death,
A city of sweet speech scorned,—on whose chill stone
Keats withered, Coleridge pined, and Chatterton,
  Breadless, with poison froze the God-fired breath ?

RALEIGH'S CELL IN THE TOWER.*

HERE writ was the World's History by his hand
  Whose steps knew all the earth ; albeit his world
  In these few piteous paces then was furl'd.
Here daily, hourly, have his proud feet spann'd
This smaller speck than the receding land
  Had ever shown his ships ; what time he hurl'd
  Abroad o'er new-found regions spiced and pearl'd
His country's high dominion and command.

Here dwelt two spheres. The vast terrestrial zone
  His spirit traversed ; and that spirit was
    Itself the zone celestial, round whose birth
    The planets played within the zodiac's girth ;
  Till hence, through unjust death unfeared, did pass
His spirit to the only land unknown.

WINTER.

How large that thrush looks on the bare thorn-tree !
  A swarm of such, three little months ago,
  Had hidden in the leaves and let none know
Save by the outburst of their minstrelsy.

* This sonnet was published in Mr. Caine's *Sonnets of Three Centuries.*

A white flake here and there—a snow-lily.
Of last night's frost—our naked flower-beds hold ;
And for a rose-flower on the darkling mould
The hungry redbreast gleams. No bloom, no bee.

The current shudders to its ice-bound sedge :
Nipped in their bath, the stark reeds one by one
Flash each its clinging diamond in the sun :
'Neath winds which for this winter's sovereign pledge
Shall curb great king-masts to the ocean's edge
And leave memorial forest-kings o'erthrown.

THE LAST THREE FROM TRAFALGAR

AT THE ANNIVERSARY BANQUET, 21ST OCTOBER, 187*

In grappled ships around The Victory,
Three boys did England's Duty with stout cheer,
While one dread truth was kept from every ear,
More dire than deafening fire that churned the sea :
For in the flag-ship's weltering cockpit, he
Who was the Battle's Heart without a peer,
He who had seen all fearful sights save Fear,
Was passing from all life save Victory.

And round the old memorial board to-day,
Three graybeards—each a warworn British Tar—
View through the mist of years that hour afar :
Who soon shall greet, 'mid memories of fierce fray,
The impassioned soul which on its radiant way
Soared through the fiery cloud of Trafalgar.

CZAR ALEXANDER THE SECOND.

(13TH MARCH, 1881.)

FROM him did forty million serfs, endow'd
Each with six feet of death-due soil, receive
Rich freeborn lifelong land, whereon to sheave
Their country's harvest. These to-day aloud
Demand of Heaven a Father's blood,—sore bow'd
With tears and thrilled with wrath; who, while they grieve,
On every guilty head would fain achieve
All torment by his edicts disallow'd.

He stayed the knout's red-ravening fangs; and first
Of Russian traitors, his own murderers go
White to the tomb. While he,—laid foully low
With limbs red-rent, with festering brain which erst
Willed kingly freedom,—'gainst the deed accurst
To God bears witness of his people's woe.

YOUTH AND LORDSHIP.*

(*Italian Street Song.*)

MY young lord's the lover
Of earth and sky above,
Of youth's sway and youth's play,
Of songs and flowers and love.

* This so-called *Italian Street-song* is certainly my brother's own composition. I have seen his MS. of it, replete with alterations.

Yet for love's desire
  Green youth lacks the daring ;
Through one dream of fire,
  All his hours ensnaring,
  Burns the boy past bearing—
The dream that girls inspire.

My young lord's the lover
  Of every burning thought
That Love's will, that Love's skill
  Within his breast has wrought.

Lovely girl, look on him
  Soft as music's measure ;
Yield him, when you've won him,
  Joys and toys at pleasure ;
  But to win your treasure,
Softly look upon him.

My young lord's the lover
  Of every tender grace
That woman, to woo man,
  Can wear in form or face.

Take him to your bosom
  Now, girl, or never ;
Let not your new blossom
  Of sweet kisses sever ;
  Only guard forever
Your boast within your bosom.

My young lord's the lover
  Of every secret thing,
Love-hidden, love-bidden
This day to banqueting.

Lovely girl, with vaunting
Never tempt to-morrow :
From all shapes enchanting
Any joy can borrow,
Still the spectre Sorrow
Rises up for haunting.

And now my lord's the lover
Of ah ! so many a sweet,—
Of roses, of spouses,
As many as love may greet.

PROSERPINA.

(*For a Picture.*)

Afar away the light that brings cold cheer
Unto this wall,—one instant and no more
Admitted at my distant palace-door.
Afar the flowers of Enna from this drear
Dire fruit, which, tasted once, must thrall me here.
Afar those skies from this Tartarean gray
That chills me : and afar, how far away,
The nights that shall be from the days that were.

Afar from mine own self I seem, and wing
Strange ways in thought, and listen for a sign :
And still some heart unto some soul doth pine,
(Whose sounds mine inner sense is fain to bring,
Continually together murmuring,)—
" Woe's me for thee, unhappy Proserpine ! "

* This sonnet, and the following one, *La Bella Mano*, might have been included in the section *Sonnets and Verses for Rossetti's own Works of Art.*

MEMORY.

Is Memory most of miseries miserable,
Or the one flower of ease in bitterest hell?

LA BELLA MANNO.

(*For a Picture.*)

O LOVELY hand, that thy sweet self dost lave
In that thy pure and proper element,
Whence erst the Lady of Love's high advènt
Was born, and endless fires sprang from the wave:—
Even as her Loves to her their offerings gave,
For thee the jewelled gifts they bear; while each
Looks to those lips, of music-measured speech
The fount, and of more bliss than man may crave.

In royal wise ring-girt and bracelet spann'd,
A flower of Venus' own virginity,
Go shine among my sisterly sweet band;
In maiden-minded converse delicately
Evermore white and soft; until thou be,
O hand! heart-handsel'd in a lover's hand.

WITH golden mantle, rings, and necklace fair,
It likes her best to wear,
Only a rose within her golden hair.

A GOLDEN robe, yet will she wear
Only a rose in her golden hair.

III.—SONNETS ON PICTURES.

FOR

AN ANNUNCIATION,*

EARLY GERMAN.

THE lilies stand before her like a screen
Through which, upon this warm and solemn day,
God surely hears. For there she kneels to pray
Who wafts our prayers to God—Mary the Queen.
She was Faith's Present, parting what had been
From what began with her, and is for aye.
On either hand, God's twofold system lay:
With meek bowed face a Virgin prayed between.

So prays she, and the Dove flies in to her,
And she has turned. At the low porch is one
Who looks as though deep awe made him to smile.
Heavy with heat, the plants yield shadow there;
The loud flies cross each other in the sun;
And the aisled pillars meet the poplar-aisle.

FOR

OUR LADY OF THE ROCKS

BY LEONARDO DA VINCI.

MOTHER, is this the darkness of the end,
The Shadow of Death? and is that outer sea
Infinite imminent Eternity?
And does the death-pang by man's seed sustained

* This is an early sonnet, hitherto unpublished—perhaps the earliest of all the *Sonnets on Pictures.*

In Time's each instant cause thy face to bend
  Its silent prayer upon the Son, while He
  Blesses the dead with His hand silently
To His long day which hours no more offend ?

Mother of grace, the pass is difficult,
  Keen as these rocks, and the bewildered souls
    Throng it like echoes, blindly shuddering through.
  Thy name, O Lord, each spirit's voice extols,
    Whose peace abides in the dark avenue
Amid the bitterness of things occult.

FOR

A VENETIAN PASTORAL

BY GIORGIONE.

(*In the Louvre.*)

WATER, for anguish of the solstice :—nay,
  But dip the vessel slowly,—nay, but lean
  And hark how at its verge the wave sighs in
Reluctant. Hush ! beyond all depth away
The heat lies silent at the brink of day :
  Now the hand trails upon the viol-string
  That sobs, and the brown faces cease to sing,
Sad with the whole of pleasure. Whither stray
Her eyes now, from whose mouth the slim pipes creep
  And leave it pouting, while the shadowed grass
    Is cool against her naked side ? Let be :—
Say nothing now unto her lest she weep,
  Nor name this ever. Be it as it was,—
    Life touching lips with Immortality.

FOR

AN ALLEGORICAL DANCE OF WOMEN

BY ANDREA MANTEGNA.

(*In the Louvre.*)

Scarcely, I think ; yet it indeed *may* be
The meaning reached him, when this music rang
Clear through his frame, a sweet possessive pang,
And he beheld these rocks and that ridged sea.
But I believe that, leaning tow'rds them, he
Just felt their hair carried across his face
As each girl passed him ; nor gave ear to trace
How many feet ; nor bent assuredly
His eyes from the blind fixedness of thought
To know the dancers. It is bitter glad
Even unto tears. Its meaning filleth it,
A secret of the wells of Life : to wit :—
The heart's each pulse shall keep the sense it had
With all, though the mind's labor run to nought.

FOR

RUGGIERO AND ANGELICA

BY INGRES.

I.

A remote sky, prolonged to the sea's brim :
One rock-point standing buffeted alone,
Vexed at its base with a foul beast unknown,
Hell-birth of geomaunt and teraphim :

A knight, and a winged creature bearing him,
  Reared at the rock: a woman fettered there,
  Leaning into the hollow with loose hair
And throat let back and heartsick trail of limb.

The sky is harsh, and the sea shrewd and salt:
  Under his lord the griffin-horse ramps blind
    With rigid wings and tail. The spear's lithe stem
  Thrills in the roaring of those jaws: behind,
That evil length of body chafes at fault.
    She does not hear nor see—she knows of them.

II.

Clench thine eyes now,—'tis the last instant, girl:
  Draw in thy senses, set thy knees, and take
  One breath for all: thy life is keen awake,—
Thou mayst not swoon. Was that the scattered whirl
Of its foam drenched thee?—or the waves that curl
  And split, bleak spray wherein thy temples ache?
  Or was it his the champion's blood to flake
Thy flesh?—or thine own blood's anointing, girl?

Now, silence: for the sea's is such a sound
  As irks not silence; and except the sea,
    All now is still. Now the dead thing doth cease
  To writhe, and drifts. He turns to her: and she,
Cast from the jaws of Death, remains there, bound,
    Again a woman in her nakedness.

FOR

A VIRGIN AND CHILD*

BY HANS MEMMELINCK.

(*In the Academy of Bruges.*)

MYSTERY: God, man's life, born into man
Of woman. There abideth on her brow
The ended pang of knowledge, the which now
Is calm assured. Since first her task began
She hath known all. What more of anguish than
Endurance oft hath lived through, the whole space
Through night till day, passed weak upon her face
While the heard lapse of darkness slowly ran?

All hath been told her touching her dear Son,
And all shall be accomplished. Where He sits
Even now, a babe, He holds the symbol fruit
Perfect and chosen. Until God permits,
His soul's elect still have the absolute
Harsh nether darkness, and make painful moan.

FOR

A MARRIAGE OF ST. CATHERINE

BY THE SAME.

(*In the Hospital of St. John at Bruges.*)

MYSTERY: Catherine the bride of Christ.
She kneels, and on her hand the holy Child
Now sets the ring. Her life is hushed and mild,
Laid in God's knowledge—ever unenticed

* These sonnets were published in *The Germ;* I have though it, on the whole, better to admit them here. A few verbal alterations are made on MS. authority.

From God, and in the end thus fitly priced.
Awe, and the music that is near her, wrought
Of angels, have possessed her eyes in thought:
Her utter joy is hers, and hath sufficed.

There is a pause while Mary Virgin turns
The leaf, and reads. With eyes on the spread book,
That damsel at her knees reads after her.
John whom He loved, and John His harbinger,
Listen and watch. Whereon soe'er thou look,
The light is starred in gems and the gold burns.

FOR

THE WINE OF CIRCE

BY EDWARD BURNE JONES.

Dusk-haired and gold-robed o'er the golden wine
She stoops, wherein, distilled of death and shame,
Sink the black drops; while, lit with fragrant flame,
Round her spread board the golden sunflowers shine.
Doth Helios here with Hecatè combine
(O Circe, thou their votaress?) to proclaim
For these thy guests all rapture in Love's name,
Till pitiless Night give Day the countersign?

Lords of their hour, they come. And by her knee
Those cowering beasts, their equals heretofore,
Wait; who with them in new equality
To-night shall echo back the sea's dull roar
With a vain wail from passion's tide-strown shore
Where the dishevelled seaweed hates the sea.

FOR

THE HOLY FAMILY

BY MICHELANGELO.

(*In the National Gallery.**)

Turn not the prophet's page, O Son ! He knew
All that Thou hast to suffer, and hath writ.
Not yet Thine hour of knowledge. Infinite
The sorrows that Thy manhood's lot must rue
And dire acquaintance of Thy grief. That clue
The spirits of Thy mournful ministerings
Seek through yon scroll in silence. For these things
The angels have desired to look into.

Still before Eden waves the fiery sword,—
Her Tree of Life unransomed : whose sad Tree
Of Knowledge yet to growth of Calvary
Must yield its Tempter,—Hell the earliest dead
Of Earth resign,—and yet, O Son and Lord,
The seed o' the woman bruise the serpent's head.

* In this picture the Virgin Mother is seen withholding from the Child Saviour the prophetic writings in which His sufferings are foretold. Angelic figures beside them examine a scroll.

FOR

SPRING

BY SANDRO BOTTICELLI.

(*In the Accademia of Florence.*)

WHAT masque of what old wind-withered New-Year
Honors this Lady ?* Flora, wanton-eyed
For birth, and with all flowrets prankt and pied:
Aurora, Zephyrus, with mutual cheer
Of clasp and kiss: the Graces circling near,
'Neath bower-linked arch of white arms glorified:
And with those feathered feet which hovering glide
O'er Spring's brief bloom, Hermes the harbinger.

Birth-bare, not death-bare yet, the young stems stand
This Lady's temple-columns: o'er her head
Love wings his shaft. What mystery here is read
Of homage or of hope ? But how command
Dead Springs to answer ? And how question here
These mummers of that wind-withered New-Year !

* The same lady, here surrounded by the masque of Spring, is evidently the subject of a portrait by Botticelli formerly in the Pourtalès collection in Paris. This portrait is inscribed "Smeralda Bandinelli."

IV.—SONNETS AND VERSES.

FOR ROSSETTI'S OWN WORKS OF ART.

MARY'S GIRLHOOD.*

(*For a Picture.*)

I.

THIS is that blessed Mary, pre-elect
God's Virgin. Gone is a great while, and she
Dwelt young in Nazareth of Galilee.
Unto God's will she brought devout respect,
Profound simplicity of intellect,
And supreme patience. From her mother's knee
Faithful and hopeful; wise in charity;
Strong in grave peace; in pity circumspect.

So held she through her girlhood; as it were
An angel-watered lily, that near God
Grows and is quiet. Till, one dawn at home
She woke in her white bed, and had no fear
At all,—yet wept till sunshine, and felt awed:
Because the fulness of the time was come.

* The picture to which these sonnets relate was the first oil-painting, 1848–49, completed by my brother. The concluding lines of sonnet 1, "She woke in her white bed," etc., have a more direct connection, however, with his second picture, *The Annunciation* (or *Ecce Ancilla Domini*), now in the National Gallery. Sonnet 2 was inscribed by my brother on the frame of his first picture. He never published it otherwise; but it has been given in Mr. Sharp's book, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, etc.

II.

THESE are the symbols. On that cloth of red
I' the centre is the Tripoint : perfect each,
Except the second of its points, to teach
That Christ is not yet born. The books—whose head
Is golden Charity, as Paul hath said—
Those virtues are wherein the soul is rich :
Therefore on them the lily standeth, which
Is Innocence, being interpreted.

The seven-thorn'd briar and the palm seven-leaved
Are her great sorrow and her great reward.
Until the end be full, the Holy One
Abides without. She soon shall have achieved
Her perfect purity : yea, God the Lord
Shall soon vouchsafe His Son to be her Son.

THE PASSOVER IN THE HOLY FAMILY.

(*For a Drawing.**)

HERE meet together the prefiguring day
And day prefigured. "Eating, thou shalt stand,
Feet shod, loins girt, thy road-staff in thine hand,
With blood-stained door and lintel,"—did God say
By Moses' mouth in ages passed away.
And now, where this poor household doth comprise
At Paschal-Feast two kindred families,—
Lo! the slain lamb confronts the Lamb to slay.

* The scene is in the house-porch, where Christ holds a bowl of blood from which Zacharias is sprinkling the posts and lintel. Joseph has brought the lamb and Elizabeth lights the pyre. The shoes which John fastens and the bitter herbs which Mary is gathering form part of the ritual.

The pyre is piled. What agony's crown attained,
What shadow of Death the Boy's fair brow subdues
Who holds that blood wherewith the porch is stained
By Zachary the priest? John binds the shoes
He deemed himself not worthy to unloose;
And Mary culls the bitter herbs ordained.

MARY MAGDALENE

AT THE DOOR OF SIMON THE PHARISEE.

(*For a Drawing.**)

"WHY wilt thou cast the roses from thine hair?
Nay, be thou all a rose,—wreath, lips, and cheek.
Nay, not this house,—that banquet-house we seek;
See how they kiss and enter; come thou there.
This delicate day of love we two will share
Till at our ear love's whispering night shall speak.
What, sweet one,—hold'st thou still the foolish freak?
Nay, when I kiss thy feet they'll leave the stair."

"Oh loose me! Seest thou not my Bridegroom's face
That draws me to Him? For His feet my kiss,
My hair, my tears He craves to-day:—and oh!
What words can tell what other day and place
Shall see me clasp those blood-stained feet of His?
He needs me, calls me, loves me: let me go!"

* In the drawing Mary has left a procession of revellers, and is ascending by a sudden impulse the steps of the house where she sees Christ. Her lover has followed her, and is trying to turn her back.

MICHAEL SCOTT'S WOOING.*

(*For a Drawing.*)

ROSE-SHEATHED beside the rosebud tongue
Lurks the young adder's tooth ;
Milk-mild from new-born hemlock-bluth
The earlier drops are wrung :
And sweet the flower of his first youth
When Michael Scott was young.

ASPECTA MEDUSA.

(*For a Drawing.*)

ANDROMEDA, by Perseus saved and wed,
Hankered each day to see the Gorgon's head :
Till o'er a fount he held it, bade her lean,
And mirrored in the wave was safely seen
That death she lived by.

Let not thine eyes know
Any forbidden thing itself, although
It once should save as well as kill : but be
Its shadow upon life enough for thee.

* My brother made two or three drawings of this subject of invention, diverse in composition. He contemplated carrying out the subject in a large picture, which was never executed ; I am not certain whether a water-color of it was produced or not. He took some pains over the wording of the illustrative verse, but never published it. I think it deserves a place here if merely as appertaining to one of his own designs.

CASSANDRA.

(*For a Drawing.**)

I.

REND, rend thine hair, Cassandra: he will go.
Yea, rend thy garments, wring thine hands, and cry
From Troy still towered to the unreddened sky.
See, all but she that bore thee mock thy woe:—
He most whom that fair woman arms, with show
Of wrath on her bent brows; for in this place
This hour thou bad'st all men in Helen's face
The ravished ravishing prize of Death to know.

What eyes, what ears hath sweet Andromache,
Save for her Hector's form and step; as tear
On tear make salt the warm last kiss he gave?
He goes. Cassandra's words beat heavily
Like crows above his crest, and at his ear
Ring hollow in the shield that shall not save.

II.

"O HECTOR, gone, gone, gone! O Hector, thee
Two chariots wait, in Troy long bless'd and curs'd;
And Grecian spear and Phrygian sand athirst
Crave from thy veins the blood of victory.
Lo! long upon our hearth the brand had we,
Lit for the roof-tree's ruin: and to-day
The ground-stone quits the wall,—the wind hath way,—
And higher and higher the wings of fire are free.

* The subject shows Cassandra prophesying among her kindred, as Hector leaves them for his last battle. They are on the platform of a fortress, from which the Trojan troops are marching out. Helen is arming Paris; Priam soothes Hecuba; and Andromache holds the child to her bosom.

O Paris, Paris! O thou burning brand,
Thou beacon of the sea whence Venus rose,
Lighting thy race to shipwreck! Even that hand
Wherewith she took thine apple let her close
Within thy curls at last, and while Troy glows
Lift thee her trophy to the sea and land."

VENUS VERTICORDIA.

(*For a Picture.*)

She hath the apple in her hand for thee,
Yet almost in her heart would hold it back;
She muses, with her eyes upon the track
Of that which in thy spirit they can see.
Haply, "Behold, he is at peace," saith she;
"Alas! the apple for his lips,—the dart
That follows its brief sweetness to his heart,—
The wandering of his feet perpetually!"

A little space her glance is still and coy;
But if she give the fruit that works her spell,
Those eyes shall flame as for her Phrygian boy.
Then shall her bird's strained throat the woe foretell,
And her far seas moan as a single shell,
And through her dark grove strike the light of Troy.

PANDORA.

(*For a Picture.*)

What of the end, Pandora? Was it thine,
The deed that set these fiery pinions free?
Ah! wherefore did the Olympia consistory
In its own likeness make thee half divine?

Was it that Juno's brow might stand a sign
  Forever ? and the mien of Pallas be
  A deadly thing ? and that all men might see
In Venus' eyes the gaze of Proserpine ?

What of the end ? These beat their wings at will,
The ill-born things, the good things turned to ill,—
  Powers of the impassioned hours prohibited.
Aye, clench the casket now ! Whither they go
Thou mayst not dare to think : nor canst thou know
  If Hope still spent there be alive or dead.

A SEA-SPELL.

(*For a Picture.*)

Her lute hangs shadowed in the apple-tree,
  While flashing fingers weave the sweet-strung spell
  Between its chords ; and as the wild notes swell,
The sea-bird for those branches leaves the sea.
But to what sound her listening ear stoops she ?
  What netherworld gulf-whispers doth she hear,
  In answering echoes from what planisphere,
Along the wind, along the estuary ?

She sinks into her spell : and when full soon
  Her lips move and she soars into her song,
  What creatures of the midmost main shall throng
In furrowed surf-clouds to the summoning rune :
Till he, the fated mariner, hears her cry,
And up her rock, bare-breasted, comes to die ?

ASTARTE SYRIACA.

(*For a Picture.*)

Mystery: lo! betwixt the sun and moon
Astarte of the Syrians: Venus Queen
Ere Aphrodite was. In silver sheen
Her twofold girdle clasps the infinite boon
Of bliss whereof the heaven and earth commune:
And from her neck's inclining flower-stem lean
Love-freighted lips and absolute eyes that wean
The pulse of hearts to the spheres' dominant tune.

Torch-bearing, her sweet ministers compel
All thrones of light beyond the sky and sea
The witnesses of Beauty's face to be:
That face, of Love's all-penetrative spell
Amulet, talisman, and oracle,—
Betwixt the sun and moon a mystery.

MNEMOSYNE.*

(*For a Picture.*)

Thou fill'st from the winged chalice of the soul
Thy lamp, O Memory, fire-winged to its goal.

* This couplet was inscribed upon the frame of the picture entitled *Mnemosyne, or the Lamp of Memory.*

FIAMMETTA.

(*For a Picture.*)

BEHOLD Fiammetta, shown in Vision here,
Gloom-girt 'mid Spring-flushed apple-growth she stands;
And as she sways the branches with her hands,
Along her arm the sundered bloom falls sheer,
In separate petals shed, each like a tear;
While from the quivering bough the bird expands
His wings. And lo! thy spirit understands
Life shaken and shower'd and flown, and Death drawn near.

All stirs with change. Her garments beat the air:
The angel circling round her aureole
Shimmers in flight against the tree's gray bole:
While she, with reassuring eyes most fair,
A presage and a promise stands; as 'twere
On Death's dark storm the rainbow of the Soul.

"FOUND."

(*For a Picture.*)

"THERE is a budding morrow in midnight:"—
So sang our Keats, our English nightingale.
And here, as lamps across the bridge turn pale
In London's smokeless resurrection-light,
Dark breaks to dawn. But o'er the deadly blight
Of Love deflowered and sorrow of none avail,
Which makes this man gasp and this woman quail,
Can day from darkness ever again take flight?

Ah ! give not these two hearts their mutual pledge,
Under one mantle sheltered 'neath the hedge
In gloaming courtship ? And, O God ! to-day
He only knows he holds her ;—but what part
Can life now take ? She cries in her locked heart,—
" Leave me—I do not know you—go away ! "

THE DAY-DREAM.

(*For a Picture.*)

The thronged boughs of the shadowy sycamore
Still bear young leaflets half the summer through ;
From when the robin 'gainst the unhidden blue
Perched dark, till now, deep in the leafy core,
The embowered throstle's urgent wood-notes soar
Through summer silence. Still the leaves come new ;
Yet never rosy-sheathed as those which drew
Their spiral tongues from spring-buds heretofore.

Within the branching shade of Reverie
Dreams even may spring till autumn ; yet none be
Like woman's budding day-dream spirit-fann'd.
Lo ! tow'rd deep skies, not deeper than her look,
She dreams ; till now on her forgotten book
Drops the forgotten blossom from her hand.

*V.—VERSICLES AND FRAGMENTS.**

THE ORCHARD-PIT.

PILED deep below the screening apple-branch
They lie with bitter apples in their hands:
And some are only ancient bones that blanch,
And some had ships that last year's wind did launch,
And some were yesterday the lords of lands.

In the soft dell, among the apple-trees,
High up above the hidden pit she stands,
And there forever sings, who gave to these,
That lie below, her magic hour of ease,
And those her apples holden in their hands.

This in my dreams is shown me; and her hair
Crosses my lips and draws my burning breath;
Her song spreads golden wings upon the air,
Life's eyes are gleaming from her forehead fair,
And from her breasts the ravishing eyes of Death.

* I have taken these from among various jottings in my brother's notebooks. The first item, named *The Orchard-Pit*, is all that I can find written of a poem which was long and seriously projected: Of the other items I need perhaps say nothing, unless it be this—that, slight as they are, they appear to me worthy of preservation on one ground or another. I do not think that any of the *Versicles and Fragments* belong to my brother's earlier period.

Men say to me that sleep hath many dreams,
  Yet I knew never but this dream alone :
There, from a dried-up channel, once the stream's,
The glen slopes up ; even such in sleep it seems
  As to my waking sight the place well known.
  * * * * *

My love I call her, and she loves me well :
  But I love her as in the maelstrom's cup
The whirled stone loves the leaf inseparable
That clings to it round all the circling swell,
  And that the same last eddy swallows up.

TO ART.

I LOVED thee ere I loved a woman, Love.

ON BURNS.

IN whomsoe'er, since Poesy began,
A poet most of all men we may scan,
Burns of all poets is the most a Man.

FIN DI MAGGIO.

OH ! May sits crowned with hawthorn-flower,
  And is Love's month, they say ;
And Love's the fruit that is ripened best
  By ladies' eyes in May.

And the Sibyl, you know. I saw her with my own eyes at Cumæ, hanging in a jar; and, when the boys asked her, "What would you, Sibyl?" she answered, "I would die."—PETRONIUS.

"I SAW the Sibyl at Cumæ"
(One said) "with mine own eye.
She hung in a cage, and read her rune
To all the passers-by.
Said the boys, 'What wouldst thou, Sibyl?'
She answered, 'I would die.'"

As balmy as the breath of her you love
When deep between her breasts it comes to you.

"WAS it a friend or foe that spread these lies?"
"Nay, who but infants question in such wise?
'Twas one of my most intimate enemies."

AT her step the water-hen
Springs from her nook, and skimming the clear stream,
Ripples its waters in a sinuous curve,
And dives again in safety.

WOULD God I knew there were a God to thank
When thanks rise in me!

I SHUT myself in with my soul,
And the shapes come eddying forth.

If I could die like the British Queen
Who faced the Roman war,
Or hang in a cage for my country's sake
Like Black Bess of Dunbar!

She bound her green sleeve on my helm,
Sweet pledge of love's sweet meed:
Warm was her bared arm round my neck
As well she bade me speed;
And her kiss clings still between my lips,
Heart's beat and strength at need.

Where is the man whose soul has never waked
To sudden pity of the poor torn past?

As much as in a hundred years, she's dead:
Yet is to-day the day on which she died.

Who shall say what is said in me,
With all that I might have been dead in me?

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